

I Wish My People Could Know

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Introduction

The essays and thoughts recorded in this book were written over a period of approximately two years. They document two intrinsically linked motions; although perhaps they are actually one motion.

First, it describes a growing discovery and understanding of Islam, the religion of God (known in Arabic as Allah), and seeking to implement this religion and call others to it. Second, it shows a deep analysis of the root causes behind the widespread suffering that presently characterizes American society, both internally, and in terms of its impact on the world. The second item is, in fact, what led me to the first.

In Islam, this first objective is known as “commanding the good,” and the second is “forbidding the evil.”

At the time this was written, I had began to practice Islam after many years of researching the different beliefs and religions of the world. I initially started to practice Islam in Germany, and after a little more than a year I returned to my native land, America, after having lived in Germany for five years.

There are multiple levels of culture shock visible in this text. On the one hand, I was readjusting to American society after a period of absence. For many years, I had the sensation that something is not right about America. Like many Americans, I thought that the Europeans were somehow better—more progressive, environmentally conscious, less violent, and with a better social support systems and more sophisticated culture.

My disappointment with America is part of what drove me to move to Europe. Coming from European ancestry, I also wanted to better understand why my ancestors had left. Like many Americans who grow up in a “liberal” milieu (in the sense of left-leaning American politics), I felt that the genocide of the native Americans was a shame upon me, and a great injustice that I continued to benefit from. Thus, I wanted to know why my ancestors had been part of this movement.

If Europe was truly “better” (and it certainly seemed like most Europeans and wealthier Americans thought it was), why had we come to America and “stolen” this land from the native Americans, massacring them and

destroying their culture in the process? Would it not, perhaps, be better if I went “back” to Europe, my people’s ancestral homeland?

I had come to the realization many years before that we are all connected. The expression “a chain is only as strong as its weakest link” stuck in my mind, and I was particularly troubled about some problems in my family, including a cousin who had perpetual problems with drug addiction. All of my relatives were divorced, including both my maternal and paternal grandparents, and somehow I felt that this was not right. I don’t know why, but I believed families should stick together, and I didn’t know why my family didn’t.

I also was affected by the very prevalent environmentalist discourse, which was increasing around the time I grew up. It seemed that our destructive way of interacting with nature was becoming an existential threat to our people. Europe also appeared to be much more environmentally conscious. They were much more active in developing solar panels and renewable energy, recycling, and drove smaller cars which consume less gas.

I suppose I felt something was very wrong about the society that I came from, and I was searching for some way to cure it. When I first traveled to Europe, I excitedly learned some of their customs and brought them back to show my family, thinking that perhaps I had found a better way. Studying in Europe would be a more in-depth way to improve the condition of my people, my homeland, and the whole of humanity.

In some years in Europe I came to realize that Europe’s “superiority” in the mind of middle and upper class Americans was actually a byproduct of America itself. This realization was due in part to the subject of my studies; I was studying the world economic and financial system, and I came to realize that Europe and America are two essential parts of a single, contiguous system.

I had hoped, like many middle class Americans, that America could one day become more like Europe; healthcare for all, social welfare for those in need, and less hawkish and violent. These characteristics were often portrayed as representing a higher phase of evolution, and indeed, evolution was the religious paradigm I had been taught to believe in. It was the creation myth, the source of my being, and the purpose of life.

I came to realize, however, that Europe was not superior at all. Rather, it was just another organ in a larger organization that seemed to be in the process

of devouring the world and imposing its values on the rest of the world. After a time I found the social welfare in Europe was not so much about caring for the people as it was about controlling them. I also realized that Europe was dependent on America's violence for their relative peacefulness.

I came to understand it was this oppression, in part, that had driven my ancestors to leave Europe. I began to miss the mountains, forests, and rivers of America. I felt a desire to do things I had rarely done before like hunting and fishing. In America, I'd had little interest in such things, though many around me were hunters and fishers. Being unable to do these things left me wanting to do them, though.

So I came to realize that although my ethnicity is European, I am very much American. My personality clashed with the Germans, and I saw all around me people who had spent decades trying to be accepted by them, and were still not fully integrated. Being part German in my ancestry, I had a better welcome from the Germans than immigrants from many other backgrounds, but to stay there I would have had to assimilate to many customs and rules that I could not accept.

With my disillusionment in the trajectory of Western civilization, I found in Islam a better model for pursuing the same goals that lay at the heart of the Western tradition. It seemed that the West had deviated from its own ideals, and that Islam remained much closer to these same ideals. Allah willing, I will detail this process at greater length in another book. This introduction is intended only to explain the context in which this book was written.

My strong desire was to find solutions to the problems that my people were facing—drug addiction, obesity, war, out of control debt, broken families, and depression, to name a few. I experienced all of these myself, in some way, so I was also searching for a cure for the pain within myself. When I looked deeply into European civilization, rather than finding solutions, I only found more problems.

As I began to study Islam, on the contrary, there was a clear light and wisdom that seemed to hold solutions to all of these problems. More than just a spiritual solution, this was a concrete legal system, and I'd personally seen its impact when visiting Afghanistan; people who were happy even in poverty, and a level of family integrity like nothing I'd ever seen in the West. I began to apply this law to myself—I left my habits with drugs and alcohol and replaced them with prayer. I realized that my social life had also

revolved around these drugs, and when my social surroundings began to revolve around religion instead, the condition of my psyche seemed to improve greatly.

I'd spent years of study engaged in policy analysis, and I began to apply my analytical skills to Islamic law. Imagining sharia as policy, I began to understand the law as a supremely merciful expression of love, kindness, and understanding of the human condition. It's not an exaggeration to say that Islam contains to the solutions to the problems I'd witnessed plaguing myself, my family, and my people, since my birth.

But more importantly, it contains a clear reminder of our real purpose. American life had degenerated into a hedonistic condition which is always overshadowed by the fear of death—the destroyer of pleasures. In order to be truly fulfilled, a human being must work towards a higher purpose. It seemed my people had turned to the ideal of liberty in order to escape from tyranny, but in the process we had become tyrants ourselves. As Nietzsche once said, "Whoever fights monsters should see to it that in the process he does not become a monster."

I found Islam searching for solutions to the problems faced by my people, but in it I found something much greater; the true purpose of our existence. Deep down, it is losing touch with this purpose which is the source of all the ills us. Whatever natural sympathy is within me cannot tolerate that I benefit from this knowledge without trying to share it.

The nature of the truth is to radiate outward; if a heart and mind carries knowledge of the truth, it must shine out in the form of intentions, words, and actions. The nature of evil is to cover; darkness cannot extinguish light, but it can hide it. The Arabic word for disbelief or infidelity, *kufr* means literally "to cover."

So most of this writing was intended to call my people to the truth, and to dispel the darkness and disease that afflicts our culture. I can't say that anyone really responded, but I tried my best to communicate the beauty and the light that I saw in Islam. I tried to communicate how God has presented to us with Islam an elegant solution to all of our problems.

Beyond just being ignored, attempting to spread this knowledge actually attracted hostility and anger. Such is the nature of *kufr*; it seeks to suppress, distort, or hide the truth.

This is the struggle that every Prophet has faced, and it is the struggle faced by those who follow in their footsteps. The title of this book is taken from a story from the Holy Quran, in which a man is killed by his people for insisting on the truthfulness of messengers that were sent to them. His devotion to his mission was such that even upon entering into the realm of death and finding the honor which he received as a result of his sacrifice, his first expression was still an expression of love for his people, the same people who had killed him. He exclaimed, upon finding the magnificence and beauty of a martyr's reward, "I wish my people could know."

I don't think I have attained anywhere near this excellence, either in terms of devotion to the truth or depth of compassion for my people, though I find the sentiment admirable and a worthy aspiration. Nonetheless, I believe there are some original ideas in these writings that could be beneficial both to Muslims and to the original intended audience in America. For this reason, these writings have been compiled and edited into book form, in the hopes that it may make them more accessible to those interested in the topics covered within.

I ask that our Lord, the Most High, the Most Merciful, the Perfectly Wise and the Most Generous, the Lord of Moses, Jesus, and Mohammed, may peace be upon them all, make this book a source of benefit and guidance to all those who sincerely seek the Truth and wish to live in accordance with its law, and I ask that He forgive me for any mistakes in this book which are entirely from myself, and protect the readers from whatever wrong or misguidance is contained within this text. Indeed, He is the Oft-Forgiving, the Forebearing.

And all praise is due to Him, the Lord of all creation.

An Invitation to Islam

When I invite someone to Islam, it's something very different than when a Christian invites them to attend their church. America is a Christian civilization to the bone, even if it is mixed with a hefty dose of paganism.

An invitation to Islam is not an invitation to a community organization. It's an invitation to another civilization. This doesn't mean negating or erasing American values or traditions, it means getting rid of the bad and keeping the good.

And many times when I have made this invitation people have replied to me "Well, I don't see the need for another religion, I'm doing fine."

I look at America and think "Really, seriously?" Is this what "doing fine" looks like? I guess I was just fortunate to be able to travel and see so many other cultures, otherwise I might think the same way.

There are those that try to point to the problems in Muslim countries as evidence that Islam is no better than Christianity. The problem with this line of thought is that the vast majority of the harm caused by Islamic civilization has been due to deviating from the core teachings of Islam, rather than adherence to them.

Even so, statistically speaking, since secularism became the dominant ideology of the world, vastly more harm has been done, on a year for year per capita basis, than was ever the case during periods of Muslim global ascendancy.¹ Never mind that secularism was built on the foundation of atrocities unprecedented in human history, like the trans-Atlantic slave trade, the genocide of the native peoples of the Americas, the Belgian genocide of the Congo, and many other similar actions.

Given this history, it's extremely odd to me that people accept the prevailing media narrative that a global hegemonic order based on Islam would

1. I came to this conclusion by analyzing all of the mass casualty events of recorded history, including massacres and wars, and adding up the total casualty estimates of the last 2000 years, with reference to the amount of violence relative to the world population at the time. It showed Christian civilization to be consistently more violent than Muslim civilization, both before and after the advent of secularism and democracy.

somewhat be worse than one based on secularism. It's just as strange that people seem to think that a Christian or secular world order is somehow working well.

I suppose it all just boils down to money. The fact is, as horrifying as it is that there are people who are willing to kill innocent people for political and religious ideologies, it is a far greater sin to establish a way of life that relies on systematically murdering and enslaving innocent people for the sake of material decadence. At least with the mass killings under Stalin, there was some higher aim, and with the mass killings of the Catholic church there was some belief that they were defending the true faith.

With American civilization, the continuous killing is clearly just to maintain a lifestyle of excessive consumption, and this excessive consumption is very harmful to the people themselves. Perhaps this was also true for the Catholics and the Communists, because America also justifies its actions with high minded ideals like democracy and human rights. Perhaps the shallowness and insincerity of this facade is just especially obvious to me since I witnessed American culture closely from both the inside and outside.

If we could simply acknowledge that there is something very wrong with Christian civilization, and accept that we must distance ourselves from this way of life, it would lead to great strides in addressing the problems facing humanity.

Some people think that the idea of hell is incompatible with a merciful God. In fact, paradise and hellfire are the **ONLY** way that this existence makes sense.

Ancestor Worship, the Eternal Relevance of the Quran, and the Testimony of Faith

For some reason people have a special relationship with the dead, and many of us have a strong inclination to honor our deceased relatives. But it's very easy to go too far with this.

عَنْ عَائِشَةَ قَالَتْ قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ فِي مَرَضِهِ الَّذِي لَمْ يَقْعُمْ مِنْهُ لَعْنَ اللَّهِ الْيَهُودَ وَالنَّصَارَى اتَّخَذُوا قُبُورَ أَنْبِيَاءِهِمْ مَسَاجِدَ

Aisha reported: The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said during his illness from which he did not recover, “*Allah has cursed the Jews and Christians who have taken the graves of their prophets as places of worship.*”²

This was said as a warning to his followers not to follow this example. Indeed, there is a real problem with excessively honoring the dead. Decorating graves and expensive funeral rituals are prohibited or discouraged in Islam, perhaps partly because giving prestige to a deceased person can be a way of elevating the status of surviving members of the family, in a way that can elevate some people in status above others, creating divisions and class rivalries within a society. Beyond this, it devotes resources to the dead that could be used to improve the situation of the living.

Consider how out of hand this can get: with the pyramids of Egypt, the labor power of hundreds of thousands of people and the productive power of a whole civilization was directed towards building tombs to satisfy the vanity of the ruling elite.

Likewise, modern society seems to be following the same path of vanity in the form of mansions, luxury cars, private jets, mega yachts, and expensive designer clothing. And incidentally, the structure of this global society is rather pyramidal- with a few elite at the top, and masses of poor at the bottom. This has always struck me, and the similarities between ancient culture and modern culture really seems to point to the continuing relevance of ancient scripture.

2. Sahih al-Bukhari Book 23, Hadith 143; Sahih Muslim Book 5, Hadith 24

I have often encountered those who think that the Bible and Quran are no longer relevant because of their age. This criticism was also common at the time of revelation:

الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا إِنْ هَذَا إِلَّا أَسَاطِيرُ الْأَوَّلِينَ

“The disbelievers say: This is naught else than fables of the men of old.”³

It seems that there is no need to improve upon or rewrite the Quran, because it expresses all the elements of the basic template of human existence, which simply plays itself out again and again in different ways.

Nietzsche actually wrote extensively on the veneration of dead, which shows the enduring importance of this topic. He believed that all religions originated from ancestor worship, and the necessity of recognizing the contribution of our forebears in providing us with all the benefits we have today. For example, imagine the difficulty involved with the first domestication of animals.

He believed after enough time, the accumulated knowledge and achievements of humanity reached the point where they were so great that the ancestors had to be deified. Eventually, his theory goes, as the development of civilization progressed the plurality of deities fused into a single deity which became the Judeo-Christian God.

As such, it is understandable that the growing scientific understanding of his era would lead him to declare that God is dead. It is also understandable that to him, religion would seem contemptible.

From an Islamic perspective, Nietzsche was quite right- the people of the past were guilty of deifying the great ones among their ancestors, and their representations of human beings did develop into deities which came to embody principles, which became objects of worship. This is actually no different than the Islamic perspective; both Nietzsche and Islam thoroughly reject religious elements of ancestor worship..⁴

This rejection of falsehood is the first part of faith. The first part of the Islamic affirmation of faith— “la ilaha” Literally it means “there is no deity.”

3. Surah al An'am, 25

4. See “The Genealogy of Morality.”

This rejection is correct— any deep study of different variations on polytheism will yield many contradictions which can only lead to confusion.

To realize the nature of falsehood is the first part of recognition of truth, so the affirmation of faith consists first of the negation of falsehood, and then the affirmation of truth. The truth is which is the unity of the Creator; “il Allah” (except **the** One and Only Divinity). So the full affirmation reads: “la-i-laha il Allah” (There is no deity except for the One God).

With this phrase, along with recognition of the truthfulness of the messenger Mohammed ﷺ a person enters faith. Once this negation of falsehood and affirmation of truth has taken place, it is as if the mind has been purified. Then, subsequently, there is a physical purification in which the whole body is washed with water.

Every ritual prayer in Islam, called “salah” must be approached in a state of physical and spiritual purity. This purity is achieved by a ritual ablution which was taught to the Prophet ﷺ by the Angel Gabriel. The ablution involves ritual washing in the name of the Lord the hands, arms, feet, face, sinuses, and mouth, and actually physically and spiritually purifies both filth and sins. Each ritual purification is followed by a renewal of the affirmation of faith, which reinforces mental and spiritual purity. After this purification, we can approach the prayer, which begins with the fatihah—a reminder of the characteristics of Allah, and a template for how to speak with Him and to ask Him for help. The true meaning of the text can only be reached with a purified mind and heart and with deep contemplation. Allah says:

لَا يَمْسُهُ إِلَّا الْمُطَهَّرُونَ

“None touch it except the purified.”⁵

Touch here could be in the sense of understanding, as in the English “to grasp.”

5. Surah Al Waqiah, 79

Islam and Happiness

A number of these essays were in response to a friend who criticized me for my critical attitude towards American society. He asked me to write instead about things that make me happy, rather than talking about things that were wrong with American society. I took his advice and eventually wrote 40 short essays about things that make me happy. Many of them are included in this book.

I was reading a travel blog I wrote ten years ago recently. It described my first trip to Morocco. I wrote that I was relieved to be in a Muslim country again, and it still feels this way today when I travel to a Muslim country after having been away. It seems that suddenly the average level of kindness, gentleness, hospitality, friendliness, and sincerity seems to increase.

Spending more time in different Muslim countries has only reinforced this sentiment. I feel I am consistently treated with more kindness and respect by random strangers in Muslim countries than I receive from my own relatives in America. This is not a personal slight against my relatives, rather, it's an issue on the level of the entire culture.

My family is not very close, so I understand that other people may have a different experience. Perhaps I was exposed to this more because of traveling alone in these countries. I mean, how many Americans actually travel through Muslim countries alone? In this sense I guess it was blessing to never have a sense of belonging or acceptance in my own country.

Deep down, everyone wants acceptance and connection with other human beings, and I'm no exception. In the US, there seems to be an intentional culture of separating and isolating people from one another. I have heard that there is an inverse relationship over the last fifty years between the amount of square feet of living space an average American has and the number of people in their life they feel they can call upon for help in a crisis. In other words, people have more and more material wealth, and less and less emotional and social wealth. So the distance between people is increasing.

I once moved to a small town in America. I really wanted to get to know my neighbors, so I went out of my way to smile and be friendly with neighbors, and I took any opportunity to talk to the people I met while out walking. In

9 months, I probably spent about 25 minutes of conversations with neighbors. I also live in a city in America and had fairly similar experiences.

In Egypt, by contrast, I once spent 4 days in a neighborhood and was invited to dinner and tea, and probably had several hours of conversation with neighbors, without going to any events or even trying.

This basic human connection, feeling accepted and valued are really important and key to being happy. And I know that I don't sense this just because I was a foreigner in these lands. I was invited into homes in countries like Afghanistan, Morocco, and Egypt, and I saw that the connection between the Muslims was very high among themselves, as well. And they extended this same warmth and kindness to me.

This is by no means to say these societies are perfect. They have tons of horrible problems. But I really do feel happier being more connected to the people around me, and I have always felt more connected to the people around me in Muslim countries.

This is why it makes me sad to see my own country extorting huge sums of wealth from its citizens, and using it to destroy Muslim countries, tearing families apart, and funding educational initiatives that undermine the core principles of Islam. And really every calamity that strikes America, every whispering of economic collapse, everything that might get America to stop its violence towards the Muslims, makes me very, very happy.

Miracles

It's common to think of miracles as something exceptional, rare, or special. Once in a lifetime occurrences.

I have always been amazed by the stories of people who were thrown into a fire and didn't burn, or saints who were shot with 80 arrows and survived, or miraculous healing, or other such anecdotes. It seemed highly improbable to me that all of these miraculous stories from all around the world could all be complete fabrications.

Eventually, I came to the conclusion that these miracles are a big part of how religions start. People see incredible things, and as a result are filled with faith and wonder. This faith and wonder is then passed on to their children, who then pass it on to their children, and the faith weakens as the generations grow further and further away from the miracles that inspired the faith in the first place.

But miracles are not actually that special, they actually seem to happen all the time. I was looking again recently at the golden ratio in the human body. This is the number that represents the Fibonacci sequence, 1.618. It continues infinitely, and it represents multiple proportions in the human body.

No one actually really understands how it is, that when the human body is forming, one cell knows how to stop replicating as, for example, a shoulder cell, and start replicating as an upper arm cell. Researchers seek the answers in stem cell research, without really actually understanding the mechanics of what is going on.

These types of everyday miracles are constantly surrounding us, to the point that we are not even really aware of all the mystery, beauty, and wonder that forms our world.

This is the benefit of prayer and reflection, that we take time out from the things that seem to matter so much to us, like money and work, and consider these miracles. And these miracles, like the more obvious miracles, are a source of faith.

The one off miracles, like causing the blind to see, for example, seem to

be connected with faith. A very low level example would be people who walk on hot coals, and are able, with mental concentration, to avoid being burned. In the narrative of the Bible, for example, it seems clear that as Jesus has successive mystical experiences, the frequency and intensity of his miracles increases.

It's also interesting to note that when examining miracles, they appear to be very much linked to faith—that is, there is a dual causality; miracles cause faith, and faith causes miracles.

As faith declines, so does the recorded frequency and intensity of miracles. It would seem that both faith and miracles, like everything else in the universe, are subject to the laws of entropy.

The media seems to constantly push magic as being really cool, as in the example of Harry Potter, but miracles seem quite a bit more amazing to me than magic. Magic seems to focus on personal power, but miracles focus on moments where a supreme power becomes aligned with a human purpose, for a moment. Both the everyday and the rare miracles make me happy.

This happiness increases in proportion to the degree that I reflect on them.

Islamic Belief and Modern Cosmology

Modern science is an incredible pageant. It's viewed by so many as a source of transcendent truth, and yet it is continually disproving its own assumptions. Take this excerpt from an article that describes a debate in astrophysics:

"Though Mitra stresses that the black hole solutions are correct, his contention is that black hole masses, arising from relevant integration constants, are actually zero. His peer reviewed paper published in the Journal of Mathematical Physics supports this contention by showing that Schwarzschild black holes have $M = 0.$] If so, the so-called massive Black Hole Candidates (BHCs) must be quasi-black holes rather than exact black holes; and during preceding gravitational collapse, the entire mass energy and angular momentum of the collapsing objects must be radiated away before formation of exact mathematical black holes.

And since the formation of a mathematical zero mass black hole requires infinite proper time, continued gravitational collapse becomes eternal, and the so-called black hole candidates must be Eternally collapsing objects (ECOs).

Mitra's papers describe why continued physical gravitational collapse should lead to formation of ECOs rather than true black holes, and the mathematical "black hole" states can be achieved only asymptotically. An ECO is essentially a quasi-stable ultra-compact ball of plasma which is so hot due to preceding gravitational contraction that its outward radiation pressure balances the inward pull of gravity. Mitra is not alone in this conclusion: Robertson and Leiter (2002) reached a similar conclusion in their introduction of the concept of a magnetospheric eternally collapsing object as an alternative to the black hole model.

In 2014, soon after Stephen Hawking called the alleged loss of information in black holes his "biggest blunder", Mitra received widespread attention in the Indian media, claiming that he had been "vindicated", citing that he had apparently refuted Hawking and indicated the same almost 13 years back.

As per the present version of Big Bang paradigm, almost 70% of the mass energy of the universe is due to dark energy whose most likely form is Einstein's cosmological constant. Mitra claims that the cosmological constant is exactly zero.

According to Mitra, a Big Bang universe can expand only linearly; therefore, popular inflationary and cyclic models are actually inconsistent.

Since perfect Hubble flow implies radially outward motion of Test particles receding from one another without any mutual collision, he claimed his research showed that the ideal Big Bang model corresponds to zero pressure and temperature. If correct, this implies that the ideal Big Bang model is fundamentally unable to describe the physical universe endowed with pressure and temperature.

He has also questioned the physical reality of dark energy."⁶

Each time we think that we understand the nature of reality, we stumble on new information that points to the conclusion that we really *don't* understand as well as we once thought. There's a metaphor for this put forth by Jesus, according to the narrative of the Bible:

"Everyone therefore who hears these words of mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on a rock. The rain came down, the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat on that house; and it didn't fall, for it was founded on the rock. Everyone who hears these words of mine, and doesn't do them will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand. The rain came down, the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat on that house; and it fell—and great was its fall."⁶

When we build our worldview on science, we take some assumptions and begin to act upon them, and to build our lives around these beliefs. Then when a new discovery changes our assumptions, many of the structures we built around those beliefs are untenable, and we have to start again. In other words, the house built on shifting sand collapses, and has to be built again.

6. Matthew 7:24-27

The Arabic Language and the Illusion of the Secular Scientific Worldview

There are a lot of gems of wisdom in the Arabic language, but one of the most profound I've stumbled on occurred to me today.

The word for knowledge and science is roughly the same— *ilm*. So, for example, psychology (*ilm al nafs*) can be translated literally as "science of the self" or "knowledge of the self."

In the context of religion, the closest thing to a priest that exists in Islam is a religious scholar, who is usually called an *alim*, which could be translated as "scholar," "learned person," "person of knowledge," or most interestingly "scientist."

Uloom, the plural of *ilm* is usually used to describe either the natural sciences or study of religion. This means, effectively, there is no linguistic difference between a priest (religious scientist) and what English speakers would consider to be a scientist.

Now, I say this is a gem of wisdom, because it lays bare the reality that the basis of the worldview of modern civilization is essentially religious.

I've been studying math lately, and as math is the basis of modern scientific theory, I realize how tenuous the relationship of science to reality is. That is, our perceptual capacity is limited, so when we focus on one thing, we necessarily lose focus on another.

The Cartesian plane is a perfect example, and if we extend it to other aspects of Descartes' thought, we can gain a lot of insight into where Western civilization went wrong. I'm referring to the homunculus.

What I mean is that when you create a 3 dimensional coordinate grid and begin constructing in it, everything you build is logically true. However, this is not at all how the universe is constructed, yet it is so easy to visualize it this way.

This has an analogue in the notion of the disembodied self, the homunculus, as a sort of self contained entity in the head, as if we are sort of controlling

the mech-suits⁷ of our bodies. What these two ideas have in common is the creation of a parallel reality based on our own cognition alone.

There are numerous black swans that make it impossible to actually describe the entire universe in a 3 dimensional coordinate plane, and yet this is the model of the universe that so many of us are operating on. Likewise, although there is extensive cognition contained in the body, many still consider the self to be located in the mind.

To assert the primacy of either the understanding of the universe founded on pure logic or the mind-body duality, we set up an understanding of ourselves as the creators of the universe—we effectively deny the existence of that which is beyond our perceptual or cognitive ability, or our representational capacity. In this way, a simulacrum is created which competes with the true reality.

This is because thought is internal to ourselves, and to assert that thought can effectively grasp the universe is to assert the supremacy of reason as a perceptive faculty. It is the senses which gather data, but it is reason which is believed to be able to understand and organize the data.

Reason was considered by many Muslim scholars to be one of the five inner sense, along with emotion, imagination and intuition.

If we regard reason as but one sense in a host of inner capacities, the idea of defining existence only according to reason is absurd. Instead of "I think, therefore I am" we could easily substitute "I see, therefore I am" or "I hear, therefore I am," and thus define our very being by means of a single perceptive faculty.

The Cartesian coordinate system is theoretical model for modeling 2 dimensional or 3 dimensional space. With any such theoretical model, there is a serious temptation to ignore data that does not fit into the schema in order to inflate one's own sense of knowledge or power. An example of this is visible in European maps of the world—due to their own ignorance, Europeans assumed that Europe was much larger relative to the rest of the world than it actually is, and they preserved this mistaken belief by inventing distorted world maps which shrunk some continents and inflated others.

⁷ Mech-suits are large robotic suits, often used in fantasy warfare in science fictions movies or video games. They usually have a human pilot somewhere inside them.

In modern society, the scientists and academics developing and using these theories fill the same role that once belonged to priests. They strive to understand the universe and communicate that understanding to the lay people in order to guide them in living a good life, and to guide society towards success. Some of the seminal institutes of higher education, like Harvard, that now serve as the central nodes of the global academic network were founded as seminaries, and in reality, their core purpose has changed little over the centuries.

It has been the case in every advanced technological civilization that the priest class becomes increasingly corrupted as time goes on. Being in a position to represent the truth carries a lot of power, and this power can easily be abused. It also tends to attract unscrupulous individuals who lust after power.

Considering the modern priest class, we could try to draw analogues to the middle ages, and ask "What is the modern equivalent of indulgences?" Indulgences, for those that don't know, were a practice whereby the Catholic church charged money for forgiving sins.

The modern "green" movement might come close. This is really a movement that is engineered by scientists/priests, which is based on some sound principles, but due to the inherent weakness of an empirical worldview, can easily be inflated, distorted, or otherwise blown out of proportion in a way that advances particular careers, beliefs or agendas. Some may be sincere in their advocacy of certain beliefs, like the role of greenhouse gases in global warming, while others may just seek to ride the discourse to a comfortable or prestigious position.

So, academia can operate on the same basic principles as priest classes, and like priest classes, it is highly susceptible to corruption and moral hazard.

Some examples of the fruit of this modern priest class are organic food, carbon credits, and "fair trade" products. All of these offer the promise of freedom from guilt and harm for a price, and all of them are fueled by highly educated individuals whose job security rests in convincing the masses of the importance of these issues.

That's not to say that sustainable agriculture, environmental stewardship, or ethical business practices are not important. The issue is the idea that you

can buy your way out of guilt. The result is the notion that you can attain moral absolution if you can just get your hands on more money.

Environmental problems are rooted in over-consumption, vanity and greed, and the idea that you can buy your way out of guilt can easily fuel the growth of more vanity and greed— most people who have spent time in affluent middle class communities in the United States can relate to the experience of being shamed for some ecological "sin," whether driving a car with poor fuel economy, not bringing a reusable bag to the grocery store, or even for eating certain kinds of food.

These ideas about what is righteous behavior and what isn't, and what someone decides to shame someone else for doing, ultimately, can be traced back to core beliefs rooted in secular scientific worldview, which in turn has its roots in Christianity and paganism. There's a lot of good in there, but it only takes a little poison to spoil the whole thing.

The Western tradition, of which our modern approach to science is a core part, never effectively broke from religion. Research design will always yield a bias towards the preconceptions of the researchers, and the preconceptions of Western civilization are rooted in the intellectual and moral history of European nations.

This civilization has reached an impressive degree of dominance, but history shows us clearly that this type of structure does not last. It is truly sad that so many people believe in the outright superiority of this paradigm because it happens to yield the most profits at the moment. Indeed, Western European civilization as a dominant, global system can only be regarded as successful by using the limited metrics developed by that same civilization.

Even by these metrics, faith in this civilization and its technology is misplaced, because any realistic assessment of the situation leads to the conclusion that this way of living is not sustainable.

Suffice to say, choose your priests/scholars/scientists carefully. Even when we are reading a casual article, it may drop data that is derived from a study developed by a researcher with a particular worldview and background. If we accept that data as "gospel," so to speak, then it can influence our notions both about the universe and ourselves, which will ultimately affect our thoughts and actions.

Love

"Anyone who loves their father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; anyone who loves their son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me."⁸

This is a pretty high bar. I would have just considered as yet another part of Christianity to disregard, but there is something similar in the authentic narrations from the Prophet Mohammed ﷺ.

Ya'qoob Ibn Ibrahim said, from Ibn 'Ulayya from Abd Ul-Azeez Ibn Suhayb from Anas from the Prophet ﷺ and also Adam from Shu'ba from Qatadah from Anas that the Prophet ﷺ said, "*None of you will believe until I am more beloved to him than his father, his children and all people.*"⁹

This hadith was also narrated by Abu Hurairah.

Abd Ul-'Azeez Ibn Suhayb's narration, which was also recorded by Ibn Khuzaimah in his sahih from Ya'qoob (the shaykh of Imam Bukhari) has the wording "...more beloved to him than his family and his wealth", rather than "his father, his children, and all people", as was also recorded by Muslim from Ibn 'Ulayya.

There is also a narration recorded by Al-Isma'eeli from 'Abd Ul-Warith Ibn Sa'eed from 'Abd Al-Azeez with the wording, "A man does not believe..." and it is more complete in a sense while the wording, "None of you believe...." is more complete in another sense.

Comparing the origins of these very similar sayings illustrates a good amount of the difference between Christian and Islamic source material.

In Christianity, almost all the information we have about Jesus is from four gospels who are named after Mark, Matthew, Luke, and John, but none of which was written by Mark, Matthew, Luke or John. These gospels were written in a language other than the language Jesus was speaking, and they were written by people who even the most rigorous Christian scholars acknowledge never saw or spoke to Jesus, and none of whom are known by name with certainty.

8. Matthew 10:37

9. Sahih al-Bukhari, 15, Sahih Muslim, 44.

The hadith, by comparison, have tons of evidence connecting them to actual events. The reliability and relative abundance of historical source material on Mohammed ﷺ can actually help to figure out what in the Bible is accurate. Whatever the source may be, both Christianity and Islam contain the idea that somehow we are supposed to love someone who we have never met more than our own parents and children, or else we are not believers. A tall order.

I believe this relates to another saying attributed to Jesus:

“No one comes to the Father except through me.”¹⁰

Prophecy is an essential component of the relationship between humanity and the Creator. It’s understandable that we need some method of indirect connection to a Creator who has no likeness— how can our minds, completely immersed in time, conceive or interact with the One who created time itself?

It’s also understandable why it is so tempting to try to symbolize the Creator as a bird, or a human being who works miracles or is miraculously resurrected. We can understand and relate to things we can conceive with our minds, and we can feel a connection to them. So a human Prophet is much easier to relate to than the All Powerful Creator Himself. I’ve always been amazed by how powerful the love is that Jesus or Mohammed (صلی اللہ علیہم وسَلَّمَ) inspire in people. The sincerity and depth of this love made it very difficult for me to hold on to my outright rejection of all the Prophets as frauds or magicians.

The Prophets are sent to convey knowledge about Allah, and to guide us in worshiping Him, but if we look at statements from Jesus and Mohammed, it appears that an essential part of loving Allah is to love His messengers.

فُلْ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ تُحِبُّونَ اللَّهَ فَاتَّبِعُونِي يُحِبِّنِكُمُ اللَّهُ

"Say, If you (really) love Allah, then follow me, Allah will love you..."¹¹
These words are referring to following the one who is delivering them,

10. John 14:6

11. Surah Al e Imran, 31

Mohammed ﷺ

Ali ibn Abi Talib was asked, "How was your love for the Messenger of Allah?" He replied, "By Allah, we loved him more than our wealth, our sons, our fathers and our mothers, and more than cold water in a time of great thirst."

This seems to line up pretty well with what Jesus said to his companions as well when describing the believers. And this similarity between the Prophets is natural:

أَبِي هُرَيْرَةَ، قَالَ فَلَمَّا رَأَى رَسُولَ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ " أَنَا أَوْلَى النَّاسِ بِعِيْسَى ابْنِ مَرْيَمَ فِي الدُّنْيَا وَالآخِرَةِ، وَالْأَنْبِيَاءُ إِخْوَةٌ لِعَلَّاتٍ، أُمَّهَاتُهُمْ شَتَّى، وَدِينُهُمْ وَاحِدٌ "

Abu Huraira reported: The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, "*I am the closest of the people to Jesus the son of Mary in this life and in the Hereafter.*" It was said, "How is that, O Messenger of Allah?" The Prophet said, "*The prophets are brothers from one father with different mothers. They have one religion and there was no other prophet between us.*"¹²

This indicates that prophecy is part of the essential relationship of the Creator to the creation, and that love for the Prophets is actually a necessary part of love of the Creator. In other words, it is impossible to love the Lord of the universe without loving the Prophets, and it is impossible to love the Prophets without loving the Lord of the universe.

I can't say that I feel for Allah the same love that I feel for my father, and yet I know that Allah is more worthy of my love. My dad loved me very much and was a great father in many ways. But the fact is that all of the goodness that came to me through my father was really from Allah.

If you want to know what you love, just watch your thoughts. When a person falls in love, all they can think about is the one they love. If it is a really intense love, they may even become uninterested in food, they may even start to lose sleep, consumed by their love.

If you think about it, this description sounds a lot like a monk, or a mystic,

12. Sahih Muslim Book 43, Hadith 190

or an ascetic. Monks in early Christianity, for example, would eat barely enough food to keep themselves alive. They would only sleep a few hours a night, and would spend the rest of the time praying, meditating, and contemplating Allah. This is the image of a lover who is longing to see his beloved. Everything else, the whole world, loses its appeal. It's as if all the beauty of the world becomes pale in comparison to the object of the love.

The early Muslims were consumed by this same love, but unlike the monks, they did not isolate themselves in remote monasteries, but rather spilled their blood while striving for the sake of Allah to establish a society based on faith and revelation. In both cases, however, their love for Allah was expressed by a deep love for their Prophets. If you just focus and try to feel it, you can almost sense the power and the beauty of this love.

If you read about saints throughout history, you will see that many of them were martyred by the governments of their time- including the Church itself. Sometimes these saints would be killed by the church and then a little while later be officially venerated by the same Church. The story is similar with many of the early Muslims.

Looking at these stories of martyrdom, it seems that the power of this love is such, that when a believer's love for Allah became strong enough that Allah would bend the physical laws of the universe as an expression of this love, and as a sign to bring faith to the people. And it also seems that when this love becomes strong enough, that the lover can no longer bear to stay in this world anymore, as the world becomes nothing more than a veil preventing the lover from reaching their beloved, and the martyrdom is simply the longed for casting off of this veil.

In a more practical sense, this love is also the spring of faith and moral behavior, because sins have the effect of making a person less aware and less connected to Allah. Hence, that connection and love for Allah are what inspire a person to avoid immoral and sinful behavior.

عَنْ أَبِي هُرَيْرَةَ عَنِ النَّبِيِّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ قَالَ "تَهَادُوا تَحَابُوا"

Abu Huraira reported: The Prophet ﷺ said, “*Give each other gifts and you will love each other.*”¹³

13. Bulugh al-Maram Book 7, Hadith 196

وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَاكَ إِلَّا رَحْمَةً لِّلْعَالَمِينَ

“And We have not sent you, [O Muhammad], except as a mercy to the worlds.”¹⁴

The words of the Prophet ﷺ show that giving gifts is an action which increases love. The giving of a gift is an expression of love on the part of the giver, and it instills the recipient with love as well. In a sense, Allah’s sending the Prophets, صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِمْ وَسَلَّمَ, to the world is a gift.

Recognizing the value of this gift, as with any other gift, should instill us with a love of the giver. If it doesn’t, it would be an expression of extreme ingratitude—and indeed, the literal meaning of *kufr*, or disbelief, is ingratitude. And to some extent, the value of the gift will be related to the amount of love generated by the gift.

It is possible to take from the bounty of Allah, and to know Allah, whether from Moses and Solomon in Exodus and Proverbs, David in Psalms, Jesus in Mark, Matthew, Luke, and John, or Mohammed from the hadith, or from the Quran which was communicated to Mohammed by the holy spirit, Gabriel. But the Prophet closest to us temporally, and the one about whom we have the most information and thereby the most possibility to love and follow, is Mohammed ﷺ.

This reflects the generosity of Allah—Allah sent Mohammed ﷺ to all of humanity, while other Prophets were sent only to their own tribes or nations, and at the same time, of all the Prophets, the greatest wealth of information that exists surrounding any of them is the tradition that goes back to Mohammed ﷺ. This gives us the richest opportunity to know and love him, and thus to know and love Allah.

14. Surah al Anbiya, 107

The Power of Prayer and the Illusion of Time

Many religious people are aware of the research that shows people heal faster when someone is praying for them. The study worked more or less as follows: individuals are given the name of a sick person, and they then pray for the person's recovery. A control group of individuals with similar conditions, but no one praying for them, is observed, and the speed of their recovery is recorded. Such tests have consistently shown better outcomes for patients who are prayed for.

There was a similar study conducted modeled along the same principle, with one important difference. The patients selected had been sick several before the experiment, and the people praying for them didn't know it. The outcomes were similar—the people who were being prayed for in the future healed more quickly in the past.

This matches with the notion of *qadr*, or destiny. It is a pillar of Islamic creed to believe in predestination. Another way to describe the reality of predestination is that time in its totality already exists. That is, Allah is aware of everything that has ever happened and ever will happen in the history of this universe.

It is part of Islamic practice to send blessings and prayer on the Prophet. Studying how blessed and miraculous his life was, I have to wonder if there is a connection between the millions of people sending prayers on him. Could it be that the millions of people who send blessings to him every day are part of the blessed events that surrounded his life?

There's a beautiful story that is recounted from the days of the *sahaba*:

"Zayd ibn Aslam said, 'Umar went out at night to observe the people and saw a lamp in a house where an old woman was teasing some wool, saying:

"The prayer of the good be upon Muhammad, may the blessed bless him! I was standing in tears before dawn. If only I knew, when death gives us different forms, whether the Abode will join me to my beloved!"

She meant the Prophet. 'Umar sat down in tears."

Imagining time in a non-linear manner, it appears that the Prophet ﷺ is a

massive nexus of love, a conduit by which human beings connect with the Creator and connect with each other in the light of love.

I can't say that I'm there, that I truly have the feeling in terms of emotional love for the Prophet ﷺ that I have for my children or parents. But I do express my love in trying to follow the path he lived, which was a life of simplicity, sincerity, kindness, and generosity, and in this sense I do love the Prophet more, because while I do want to embody the good qualities of my father, my desire to embody the good qualities of the Prophet as a role model is much greater, because I know that the Prophet ﷺ is a much greater and more blessed man than my father.

The beauty of love for Allah and His messenger ﷺ and his sunnah, is that when we see the blessings and light it brings into our lives we know it is only with Allah's permission that we are able to experience this. If we are aware of the enormity of this blessing, we can't help but become filled with gratitude, which in turn will increase our love, which again will make us more grateful for and humbled by the generosity and grandeur of the Most High, which in turn will cause us to love Allah more, and so on, in a virtuous cycle.

This is one way that I visualize the path to Paradise, and I ask that Allah guide us to it and keep us firm on it.

The Disapproval of the Kuffar

وَلَنْ تَرْضَىٰ عَنَّكَ الْيَهُودُ وَلَا النَّصَارَىٰ حَتَّىٰ تَتَّبِعَ مِلَّتَهُمْ قُلْ إِنَّ هُدًى اللَّهِ
هُوَ الْهُدَىٰ وَلَئِنْ اتَّبَعْتَ أَهْوَاءَهُمْ بَعْدَ الَّذِي جَاءَكَ مِنَ الْعِلْمِ لَا مَالَكَ مِنَ اللَّهِ
مِنْ وَلِيٍّ وَلَا نَصِيرٍ

“And never will the Jews or the Christians approve of you until you follow their religion. Say, “Indeed, the guidance of Allah is the [only] guidance.” If you were to follow their desires after what has come to you of knowledge, you would have against Allah no protector or helper.”¹⁵

Kaffir literally means someone who “covers” or conceals (the truth) and it also means “ungrateful”. In American contexts it is often translated as “infidel.” Infidel literally means someone who has no faith. In this context it means to cover the truth, either by denying it or by diverting from it by focusing on someone else.

In Islam it refers to those who either inwardly or outwardly reject what was sent to by Mohammed, prayer and peace be on him, by the Lord of the universe.

Having the kuffar be displeased with you should be a source of inner peace and happiness for any Muslim, because it is an affirmation that you are on the right path.

It’s not only displeasure from the Christians and Jews that is a sign you’re doing something right—hypocritical Muslims will also turn against you. Allah says:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا تَتَّخِذُوا الْيَهُودَ وَالنَّصَارَىٰ أَوْلَيَاءَ بَعْضُهُمْ أَوْلَيَاءُ بَعْضٍ
وَمَنْ يَتَوَلَّهُمْ فَإِنَّهُ مِنْهُمْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يَهْدِي الْقَوْمَ الظَّالِمِينَ

O you who have believed, do not take the Jews and the Christians as allies. They are [in fact] allies of one another. And whoever is an ally to them

15. Surah al Baqarah, 120

among you - then indeed, he is [one] of them. Indeed, Allah guides not the wrongdoing people.¹⁶

In other words, those Muslims who have formed alliances with the Jews and Christians are of them.

The word "allies" here is actually awliya, the plural of wali, which means a "protecting friend." It means someone who you derive protection from, and can also mean a close friend. It makes sense, because generally in order for someone to want to protect you, you have to do something or have some kind of relationship with them.

A modern example of this relationship might be citizenship. Some Muslim scholars have said Muslims should not take the oath for American citizenship since it requires swearing to obey the constitution, which is human made law which contradicts the law of Allah. However, those who are granted citizenship automatically for various reasons are exempted, whereas those who apply for it are not.

Another interesting aspect of this verse is that the word wali also refers to the guardian of the female in the Islamic marriage contract. A wali must be of the same religion as the bride by the consensus of the scholars, so this verse has multiple levels- there is the political level where it refers to tribal alliances, the personal level where it refers to close friendships which are a source of solace and refuge- the type of friend who you would rely on in a crisis- and it could also refer to marriage, the guardian of a woman who is tasked with caring for her well being and trying to make sure she doesn't marry an abusive deadbeat or something.

So when a Muslim takes a Christian or Jew as a wali, they become one of them. At this point, they have left their religion, and at this point the Christians and Jews would usually be pleased with them. A sincere Muslim cannot expect this type of person (the Muslim who has taken kuffar as awliya) to ever be pleased with them either, because there is a bond of sympathy linking them to their allies, such that whatever makes the Jews and Christians upset will also upset them.

This is why I get scared any time I see a kaffir pleased with me as a person, or really just about anything that I do or say.

16. Surah al-Maidah, 51

It's very difficult to practice Islam in an environment with few Muslims around, because it's very hard on the psyche to be surrounded by people who hate you. The benefit is that it can cause you to turn to Allah, the Most High, the Creator of the universe, who is the Most Kind and the Most Merciful, the Most Generous who has given us the blessing of the light and knowledge of Islam, the one who sent Moses, Jesus, and Mohammed with the truth, the loving, the Supreme, the Magnificent and Majestic, the Truly Worthy of Praise, the Eternal, the Holy, the Peace, the Truth, the One, the Only, the Giver of Life and Causer of Death, the All Knowing, the All Seeing, the All Hearing, the Perfectly Wise, the Great, the Subtle, the Exalter and the Abaser.

If you lose all your friends and family but gain a friend in Allah, you've lost nothing and gained everything. And if you gain the admiration and love of the whole world but lose Allah, you've lost everything and gained nothing.

So I suppose it is better to be isolated, and I pray Allah gives me the steadfastness to hold firm on to this way of life, because I have clearly seen in so many ways that the path of the kuffar leads to wretchedness in this world. This makes it much easier for me to believe that the revelation is true when it affirms that their lot is wretchedness in the next world as well.

Wudhu

Wudhu literally means radiance. Practically it means ablution, the ritual cleansing which precedes prayer in Islam.

قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ "الظَّهُورُ شَطْرُ الْإِيمَانِ"

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: "*Cleanliness is half of faith...*"¹⁷

Purification after relieving oneself is part of wudhu as well, meaning cleaning the affected areas around the urethra and anus with water after using the toilet. An experiment that can illustrate the wisdom of this well is rubbing some peanut butter on your arm. Then wipe it off with toilet paper and get it as clean as you can, and then lick the spot on your arm where the peanut butter was. Tastes like peanut butter. Now try the same thing, washing the spot with water, then lick it. Tastes like nothing.

I can't believe I spent so many years of my life cleaning my anus with paper, doing myself bodily harm, and walking around with a dirty anus. It is a really nice and uplifting feeling to be clean, and now when I get stuck without water somewhere I really notice the difference.

But this is just one aspect of purification. Wudhu consists of cleaning the hands, mouth, nose and sinuses, face, forearms, head, ears, and feet with water, in that order. It begins with "Bismillah," (in the name of God) and ends with "Ash hadu an la ilaha il Allah, wa ash hadu anna Muhammad ar Rasool Allah" (I bear witness that there is no deity but God, and that Muhammad is a messenger of God) and another supplication that goes "Allahuma ja'alnee mina tawabeena wa ja'alnee minal mutatahireen" (Lord, make me among those who repents and make me among those who is purified.)

A saying passed down from the Prophet Mohammed says that at the time of Resurrection the Muslims will be recognizable by light coming from their faces, hands, and feet from having done wudhu during their lifetimes.

عَنْ عَبْدِ اللَّهِ بْنِ مَسْعُودٍ قَالَ قِيلَ يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ كَيْفَ تَعْرِفُ مَنْ لَمْ تَرَ مِنْ أَمْتِكَ قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ غُرُّ مُحَاجِلُونَ بِلْقُ مِنْ آثَارِ الْوُضُوءِ

17. Sahih Muslim Book 2, Hadith 1

Abdullah ibn Mas'ud reported: It was said, "O Messenger of Allah, how will you recognize those you have never seen from your nation?" The Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, said, "*Radiant streaks upon their limbs from the traces of ablution.*"¹⁸

When I was in school, I saw a model of the human body where the size of body parts was enlarged based on the number of nerve endings in the area. The hands and feet and face, nose, lips, ears were all huge, and everything else was kind of small.

So these areas that are washed in preparation for the act of remembering our origin and our destination are really the most intense parts of our body in terms of the nervous system. Wudhu physically removes sins, which indicates that there is a connection between the spiritual and physical dimensions.

عَنْ أَبِي هُرَيْرَةَ أَنَّ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ قَالَ "إِذَا تَوَضَّأَ الْمُسْلِمُ أَوْ الْمُؤْمِنُ فَعَسَلَ وَجْهُهُ خَرَجَ مِنْ وَجْهِهِ كُلُّ حَطِيبَةٍ نَظَرَ إِلَيْهَا بِعِينِيهِ مَعَ الْمَاءِ أَوْ مَعَ آخِرِ قَطْرِ الْمَاءِ فَإِذَا غَسَلَ يَدَيْهِ خَرَجَ مِنْ يَدِيهِ كُلُّ حَطِيبَةٍ كَانَ بَطَشْتُهَا يَدَاهُ مَعَ الْمَاءِ أَوْ مَعَ آخِرِ قَطْرِ الْمَاءِ فَإِذَا غَسَلَ رِجْلَيْهِ خَرَجَ كُلُّ حَطِيبَةٍ مَشَنَّهَا رِجْلَاهُ مَعَ الْمَاءِ أَوْ مَعَ آخِرِ قَطْرِ الْمَاءِ حَتَّى يَخْرُجَ نَفِيًّا مِنْ الدُّنُوبِ"

Abu Huraira reported: The Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, said, "*When a Muslim or a believer washes his face in ablution, every sin that he committed with his eyes will be washed away with the last drop of water. When he washes his hands, every sin that he committed with his hands will be washed away with the last drop of water. When he washes his feet, every sin that he committed with his feet will be washed away with the last drop of water, until he emerges purified from sin.*"¹⁹

I encountered similar ideas during my exploration of new age ideas. The theory goes that there is some sensitivity in the body to electromagnetic fields. Of course, everything generates an electromagnetic field, and particularly anything where electric current is flowing, like the nerve system.

18. Sunan Ibn Majah Book 1, Hadith 284

19. Sahih Muslim Book 2, Hadith 44

Most sins are indeed committed by the parts of our body with the highest concentration of nerves— the eyes, the mouth, the genitals, the hands, and the feet. All of which are washed as a part of wudhu. It is sunnah, or the practice of the Prophet, to perform wudhu before each of the five daily prayers, and also at other times. This is a really refreshing feeling.

One of the main descriptions of the Crusaders by Muslims of the era was that you could smell their stench from a considerable distance.

Hygiene

إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُحِبُّ التَّوَابِينَ وَيُحِبُّ الْمُتَطَهِّرِينَ

Allah loves those who purify themselves.²⁰

عَنْ عَائِشَةَ عَنْ النَّبِيِّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ قَالَ السِّوَاكُ مَطْهَرٌ لِلْفَمِ مَرْضَانٌ
لِلرَّبِّ

Aisha reported: The Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, said, “*The siwak (miswak) is cleansing for the mouth and pleasing to the Lord.*”²¹

The root of the Peelu tree has been used for a long time by many cultures for cleaning the teeth. You peel off some of the bark and chew on the fibers, and they separate to form a sort of brush. My teeth feel so clean when I use this, and I really just don't feel right without it.

I transitioned into it slowly, but after a while I noticed that using the plastic toothbrush and toothpaste that I felt a film on my teeth. I honestly believe that toothpaste makes the teeth weaker and contains a bunch of stuff that is not beneficial to the body. Both the medical and dental industries seem to weaken the body so that you will depend more on the industries. Repeat customers are just more valuable.

I wonder, why use a product of inferior quality that is harmful to you and doesn't even really get your teeth clean when you can use one from nature that gets your teeth cleaner, is biodegradable and renewable, and contains only chemicals that are beneficial to the body?

In spite of all the flaws of the toothbrush and the advantages of the miswak, I can't help but notice that people stand to defend their inferior product instinctively when I criticize it.

When I was teaching my son about the miswak, I noticed that if I highlighted the negative aspects of the toothbrush that he would instinctively cling to the

20. Surah al Baqarah, 222

21. Musnad Ahmad Book 1, Hadith 7

toothbrush, whereas if I highlighted the advantages of the miswak that he would be more open to it. People have a natural tendency to be defensive when they sense aggression I guess, even if the person being aggressive means them well.

I have been brushing my teeth exclusively with miswak for about 5 years, and I just went to the dentist for the first time in 6 years and she said there was hardly anything for her to do. I suppose my teeth could be whiter but they are healthy and strong and I don't really need to impress anyone.

Siwak also has benefits for digestion, and really the whole body originates in the digestive system, so a clean mouth is the beginning of overall health.

Part of the issue is the excessive faith in science, which has replaced older forms of faith. This faith is so strong that we believe our limited understanding is complete. This has led to the logic of disinfection. When we discovered that proliferation of viruses and bacteria are related to illnesses, the theory was put forth that if we can figure out how to kill the viruses and bacteria, that we can avoid being sick.

But there's a lot of question marks remaining around this theory. Why is it that some people, when exposed to a pathogen, become sick, while others don't? Why is it that many modern maladies, like autoimmune conditions, don't exist in other parts of the world where people have more exposure to bacteria, and less exposure to antibiotics and disinfectants? The preference for white, industrially produced medical and hygiene products over natural products is ultimately a result of the belief in the superiority of sterility.

Now, in the style typical of Western civilization, a backlash against these excesses is underway. Thousands of products are now on the market that contain probiotics, or beneficial bacteria. After spending decades trying to eliminate bacteria, we now realize we are harming ourselves, and are scrambling to replenish the populations of beneficial bacteria. Fecal transplants are even gaining popularity, where people take pills filled with freeze dried stool to introduce missing strains of bacteria into their intestines.

This fallacious thinking with regards to bacteria is also behind the preference for toilet paper. The idea is that there is some terrible danger in touching feces. But low level exposure to bacteria acts as a natural vaccine by introducing pathogens in manageable quantities, which allows our immune systems to develop antibodies without the infection getting out of hand.

But hey, guess what? You can get exposure to beneficial bacteria without eating feces by good old fashioned human contact. Sure, you will get sick sometimes, but this also stimulates, strengthens, and fortifies the immune system for dealing with more serious pathogens. Shaking hands, sharing the same dish of food with others—these rituals are methods of transferring manageable quantities of bacteria and maintaining the diversity of our inner ecosystems.

Beyond the direct benefits of bacteria, increased social contact also has positive effects on mental health, reducing stress and improving sleep, which is known to strengthen the immune system.

So we can see that following the example of the Prophet ﷺ is a far safer course of action than following whatever happens to be the theory of the hour coming out of the Western medical and scientific complex.

If we consider that bacteria are an essential part of the functioning of our immune system, in a way, they are part of us. So when we try to eliminate bacteria, we are not purifying ourselves, but rather we are harming ourselves, and causing ourselves long term harm to gain a temporary benefit—the modus operandi of the entire modern world order.

Engineering an Illusion of Superiority

There is a lot of misunderstanding, fear, and confusion surrounding Islam in the West. If there wasn't, it would mean a centuries long propaganda effort, that currently costs billions of dollars every year, was not working. But this extended smear campaign which stretches back before the Crusades has been and continues to be quite effective.

One of the latest variations on this propaganda is the notion that Western countries are somehow less violent than Muslim societies. This idea stems not only from disproportionate coverage of violence in the Muslim world. It also comes from a trick of media sleight of hand I call 'externalization.' It operates on the same principle as 'misdirection,' which is a key element of magic. This is a major trend that consistent in many aspects of the Western worldview. Following are a few examples.

Externalizing Social Violence with Prisons

The United States is an incredibly violent country. In researching the Egyptian revolution and the ensuing chaos, I wanted to find out the death toll resulting from all of the associated events, including the overthrow of Mubarak, the election of Morsi, the coup, the Sinai insurrection and all of the bombings, including the downing of the Russian airliner. After tallying all of this up, the total number killed in the 6 years after Mubarak left power was between 7,000-8,000.

This number was somewhat surprising, because I distinctly recalled that the average annual number of gun killings in the US totals around 10,000-11,000. Of course, the US has a much larger population than Egypt.

Egypt's murder rate is .8 per 100,000 people, which means there are between 700 and 800 homicides in the whole country. The number of killings has spiked during the revolution and the insurgency/low level civil war happening now, and if we average out all that violence, and add it to the normal murder rate, we get a number close to 2000 murders per year, rounding up. Egypt's population is estimated at 91 million, while the US is 321 million, so there are 3.5 more people in the US than in Egypt.

Dividing America's rate of killings by 3.5 and comparing it to Egypt's, even in a time of violence, revolution, massacres, and armed insurrection against the government, we find that America has approximately 50% more annual killings per capita. In other words, Egypt in a time of war is still half as violent as America in a time of peace.

These aren't just statistics. Living in Egypt, I could really feel this. In all of my interactions and from the general social atmosphere, it was simply much more tranquil and relaxing.

The actual statistics on violence don't really reflect how violent America is, either, because a huge amount of the violence is prevented through imprisonment. This is what I mean by "externalizing." A lot of very disturbed and violent people are locked in boxes in remote and rural areas where no one sees them.

No one denies that this system is basically ineffective in actually changing people's behavior— rates of recidivism are very high. All this does is effectively kicks the can down the road, not dealing with the problem, but simply hiding it away. Inside of these prisons, the same behaviors and mental illnesses are intensified by creating an artificial peer group composed of criminals and the mentally ill, so these tendencies bounce off of each other in a sort of echo chamber and intensify. There is a huge cost to this, with yearly maintenance per prison inmate averaging about \$50,000 a year.

In Egypt there are an estimated 100,000 people in prison, compared to over 2 million in the US. This means that at least .6% of the population is in prison, though most estimates put the number closer to 1%. In Egypt, only .001% of the population is in prison. If the prison population of the United States were the same proportion as the prison population of Egypt, it would mean releasing over one and a half million inmates. Since many of these inmates would most likely be mentally ill and very difficult to employ, it would probably lead to a sharp increase in violence. When we try to imagine these numbers, and consider what America would be like if America's budget for law enforcement was as constrained as Egypt's, we get a feel for just how much more violent American society is than Egyptian society.

This general pattern holds true across many Muslim countries— in fact, with a few exceptions, like Iraq, Egypt is one of the most violent Muslim countries, and has a large prison population relative to other Muslim countries.

Prison is not only a form of social externalization, whereby violent elements of society are hidden from view without addressing the real problem. It's also a form of individual externalization. While in medieval Europe punishments were public and often extremely violent (due in large part to a limited budget), prison is not really any less violent when we look at the psychological effect. Instead of outright physical damage, it disfigures and mutilates people's minds, which then passes for being more humane, since it is not as easy to quantify the damage done.

So we don't have public discipline like hangings or caning in the US anymore, but we are doing similar damage in order to achieve social control, but it is hidden in two ways;

- Violent people are quarantined and hidden from view.
- Disciplinary violence is hidden on a less apparent level.

This approach is more pleasant in the short run, and more unpleasant in the long run, because it relieves a symptom while doing nothing about the root cause. Really, it actually aggravates the root cause, because the source of violence is more often than not an individual's inability to integrate smoothly into society. Spending time in prison results in an even more damaged mind which makes it even more difficult to integrate into society, which leaves the individual unable to fulfill their needs, and thus more likely to be violent.

Geopolitical Externalization of Violence

NATO is an example of externalization on the international level. By means of specialization, European states are able to maintain extensive social systems, thus providing satisfactory conditions for a higher number of citizens, which translates to lower rates of violence. The United States carries the bulk of the military burden, which allows European nations to focus more on social programs.

If NATO were to break apart, Europe would be left in a very vulnerable state. This is unlikely to happen, because by means of economic ties, Europe contributes heavily to the American economy.

This is how a military alliance can allow projecting an image of peacefulness, when in reality they are partners in quite extreme violence.

Environmental Externalization

There is much talk in Europe and the US about environmental regulation, and sustainability. At the same time, these markets are utterly economically dependent on a range of imports from China, where environmental regulation is comparatively lax. In China, labor law and health regulations are such that people suffer under tremendous burden of stress, and many people develop cancer and other diseases as a result of being exposed to toxic chemicals during manufacturing processes.

This is what makes the Chinese exports so cheap, and these low prices are essential to both the happiness of individuals and the success of corporations located in Europe and the US. Thus, outsourcing the poisoning of the environment allows the West to reap the benefits of this destruction while outwardly preaching to others about environmental consciousness.

Externalizing Human Rights

Besides just the importing of cheap manufactured goods from countries with no protections for workers, violence is externalized by support for a number of dictators who routinely use torture, completely disregard due process and civil liberties, and often engage in indiscriminate and extra-judicial killings. Some examples would be the foreign aid from the US to governments like Pakistan, Egypt, Jordan, Morocco, Uzbekistan, paramilitary groups in Colombia, the Suharto massacres in Indonesia, just to name a few.

In this way the West is able to reap the rewards that come with violent totalitarian regimes while being conveniently insulated, allowing the creation of a narrative of moral superiority.

Temporal Externalization

If moving atrocities, injustice, and cruelty to locations that are out of view is one means of creating an illusion of moral superiority, it would follow that to do so temporally would also be a means of cultivating this illusion. This is evidenced by the extreme short term perspective.

It is the national perspective that allows Europe and the US to claim superiority—they can point to the lower pollution levels, infant mortality, or

life expectancy within their own borders, ignoring the impact that their lifestyle has on other countries in affecting these same indicators. They can even use the damage that they do to other countries as proof that those societies and their ways of life are inferior and in need of 'development aid,' or salvation by European cultures.

This reinforces an inferiority complex essential to continued dominance. Anyone who has ever been a competitive fighter, whether in boxing or wrestling or any other martial art, knows that if you mentally accept the superiority of your opponent, you have lost before the fight has even begun.

If we move the level of analysis to the global level, however, this narrative rapidly falls apart as the inter-dependencies become clearer. This is spatial externalization.

Examples of temporal externalization are the models of corporate profit that do not consider environmental costs, planned obsolescence, or industrial scale medicine for profit.

Corporate Profit

Corporate profit only focuses on the bottom line within a limited time period. Just as a territory like the United States is cordoned off with a border, a fiscal year or a quarter is cordoned off, and one measure of success is emphasized; overall profit. Never mind that IKEA may have had to pay fines for purchasing wood that was illegally logged from protected forest lands in Siberia—if the profits gained from the furniture that was sold with this wood are enough to counterbalance the fines that had to be paid, it was a successful venture.

This doesn't factor in other sources of value, and particular sources of value to future or past generations, including:

- the biodiversity of the earth's last remaining virgin forests,
- the genetic resources of the plants that grow in it with undiscovered (by Western science) medical value,
- the intangible value of the cultural traditions of the native people of those forests and their traditional knowledge,
- the long term benefit that those forests could have had in offsetting and absorbing pollution,

- the wind force that those trees would have absorbed, and the damage caused by extra wind force that now sweeps over plains rather than being absorbed by trees
- the loss of topsoil that could have produced higher quality food over a longer period of time.

If you were to calculate the value of what is lost, and compare it to the profits gained, the equation would look very different than it does by focusing on a narrow temporal and spatial field of analysis.

Planned Obsolescence

Planned obsolescence is another example of temporal externalization, where resources are abused in order to achieve higher profits, eventually leading to major costs for society.

In planned obsolescence, goods are intentionally produced with design flaws that will cause them to fail after a determined period of time or use. This forces the buyer to purchase new goods and throw away the old ones, thereby increasing profit for the producer.

The spiritual effects of this circumstance include ingratitude, which is a form of disbelief. It is disbelief in Allah, because it is a refusal to acknowledge his blessings. When we purchase a product which is designed to fail, this will generally cause us to feel resentment toward the manufacturer of the product and the product itself.

Subtle emotional effects include developing an attitude towards material objects as being disposable, which leads to a general attitude of wastefulness that can also affect interpersonal relationships. This is because our method of interacting with the natural world will invariably affect our way of thinking about human beings, as we are very much a part of the natural world. Furthermore, it shapes our overall habits and personality.

Aside from the spiritual and emotional consequences, planned obsolescence also leads to acceleration of the depletion of non-renewable resources, as the rate of consumption accelerates to accommodate an unnecessarily high rate of production.

Viewed outside of the customary narrow temporal perspective, efficiency can indeed become very inefficient. Especially when we consider that much of humanity's industrial production is directed towards producing goods that are pure luxuries and not at all necessary for living a meaningful, fulfilling, and good life.

Standing Against Oppression

Practically speaking, it is not necessary to understand all of this deception and evil to actively oppose it. If a person implements the authentic creed of Islam in their life, the effect will be a more or less gradual dissociation from the evil which is hidden by means of externalization.

To disassociate oneself from all this corruption, deception, and hypocrisy, ultimately requires limiting both emotional and material support for those who are engaged in these practices. We are heavily affected by those around us, and simply having positive emotional connections with others is a form of supporting them.

The emphasis in Islam on the absolute unity of divinity means that there is a corresponding understanding of unity of the universe; all of reality has a common source. This principle of unity means that what is detrimental to others is ultimately detrimental to ones self, so if people are engaged in harming others, and thereby themselves, a Muslim cannot in good conscience be "tolerant" and thereby supportive of a persons self-destructive behavior.

This applies between Muslims as well:

حَدَّثَنَا مُسَدِّدٌ، حَدَّثَنَا مُعْتَمِرٌ، عَنْ حُمَيْدٍ، عَنْ أَنَسٍ - رضى الله عنه - قَالَ قَالَ رَسُولُ اللهِ صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ "اْنْصُرْ أَخَاكَ ظَالِمًا أَوْ مَظْلُومًا". قَالُوا يَا رَسُولَ اللهِ هَذَا نَنْصُرُهُ مَظْلُومًا، فَكَيْفَ نَنْصُرُهُ ظَالِمًا قَالَ "تَأْخُذُ فُوقَ يَدِيهِ"

Allah's Messenger ﷺ said, "*Help your brother, whether he is an oppressor or he is an oppressed one.*" People asked, "O Allah's Messenger! It is all right to help him if he is oppressed, but how should we help him if he is an oppressor?" The Prophet ﷺ said, "*By preventing him from oppressing others.*"²²

As the value of community is heavily emphasized in Islam, however, the community of the Muslims must be well insulated from the evil of the kuffar. The prime method of helping the kuffar is by offering inviting them to the truth, and offering them protection and justice as subjects of the Islamic

22. Sahih al-Bukhari Book 46, Hadith 5

government, and by seeking to prevent their oppression with force if necessary.

This can require harshness, but it is far from cruelty. Showing friendliness and kindness to a person engaged in self destructive behavior is actually no kindness at all, because it leads them to believe that their evil actions, which they regard as good, are indeed correct, causing them to feel more justified in continuing this harmful behavior. This is why Allah says:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا مَن يَرْتَدَ مِنْكُمْ عَنِ دِينِهِ فَسَوْفَ يَأْتِي اللَّهُ بِقَوْمٍ يُحِبُّهُمْ وَيُحِبُّونَهُ أَذْلَلَةً عَلَى الْمُؤْمِنِينَ أَعْزَزٌ عَلَى الْكَافِرِينَ يُجَاهِدُونَ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ وَلَا يَخَافُونَ لَوْمَةَ لَائِمٍ ذَلِكَ فَضْلُ اللَّهِ يُوتِيهِ مَن يَشَاءُ وَاللَّهُ وَاسِعٌ عَلَيْهِ

“O you who have believed, whoever of you should revert from his religion - Allah will bring forth [in place of them] a people He will love and who will love Him [who are] humble toward the believers, powerful against the disbelievers; they strive in the cause of Allah and do not fear the blame of a critic. That is the favor of Allah ; He bestows it upon whom He wills. And Allah is all-Encompassing and Knowing.”²³

The most fundamental issue is the perception of the common origin of all phenomena (tawheed), and all other moral issues stem from this initial concern.

This is why we see consistent enmity between those who believe in a multiplicity of deities, or who do not have a clear boundary line between the eternal and the temporary, and those who believe in a unified and transcendent divinity. Likewise, if we see someone who claims to worship Allah alone having affection or friendship with mushrikin, we can know from this that the tawheed is not present.

Tawheed is a matter of purity, while shirk is a form of spiritual filth:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِنَّمَا الْمُشْرِكُونَ نَجَسٌ فَلَا يَقْرَبُوا الْمَسْجِدَ الْحَرَامَ بَعْدَ عَامِهِمْ هَذَا وَإِنْ خُفْتُمْ عَيْلَةً فَسَوْفَ يُغْنِيَكُمُ اللَّهُ مِنْ فَضْلِهِ إِنْ شَاءَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلِيمٌ حَكِيمٌ

23. Surah Maida: 54

“O you who have believed, indeed the polytheists are unclean, so let them not approach al-Masjid al-haram²⁴ after this, their [final] year. And if you fear privation, Allah will enrich you from His bounty if He wills. Indeed, Allah is Knowing and Wise.”²⁵

24 In this sense, “haram” means “holy” and is referring to the Holy Sanctuary in Mecca which was established by Abraham and Ishmael as a place of worship.

25. Surah At-Tawbah: 28

A Hidden War: The Right-Left Combination

There are unique challenges that come with an enemy that presents itself as a friend.

The political left in the west wages war on Islamic culture under the guise of acceptance, when in reality they are pushing a redacted form of Islam that is relegated to the private sphere. The notion of removing anything from the religion or adding anything to it is completely unacceptable in Islam, and is a form of rejecting Allah and His revelation and putting ones self on the level of Allah, and we seek refuge in Allah from this gravest of sins.

Islam is a complete code of life and must be central not only to every part of an individuals life, but also to every aspect of the general social life.

In the covert strategy to divert Muslims from this way of life, Islamic identity is eroded by conditional offers of friendship and inclusion in kaffir societies, on the condition of omission of key elements of the religion and acceptance of elements of democracy or other belief systems.

Once Muslims have taken the bait and begin to participate in these societies, their identity becomes watered down enough that they can easily be rope-a-doped into participation in the grotesque and inhuman lie of nationalism. Once they have loyalty to a nation state, they can accept participating in the war against their own people in exchange for some paltry worldly gain, whether it be in the form of moral, logistical, or financial support.

Once this stage has been reached, it's not long before outright military participation against the Muslims becomes acceptable. If I financially support the military with taxes, why not accept a profitable contract to provide supplies to the military? And if I supply the military, why not just join them as well and share in the loot? After all, these are extremists we are fighting, right? Didn't the Islamic scholars who are allowed to publicly preach all say that they're deviants?

This narrative which is pushed forward by the scholars is one of the most critical elements lubricating the slippery path to betrayal of Islam and the Muslims.

Whether these scholars are motivated by worldly gain or are sincere in their

aims, there is no doubt that there is great worldly gain to be had by parroting the echo chamber of the media, affirming that the Islam that cooperates with the Western imperial agenda and doesn't resist occupation and invasion is the real Islam, and casting those who actively resist as soulless extremists.

The military methods used by some Muslims may be right or wrong—regardless, none of this makes it acceptable to fight them in conjunction with the enemies of Allah and for the benefit of the enemies of Allah.

مَنْ كَانَ عَدُوًّا لِّلَّهِ وَمَلَائِكَتِهِ وَرُسُلِهِ وَجِبْرِيلَ وَمِيكَالَ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ عَدُوٌّ لِّلْكَافِرِينَ

“Whoever is an enemy to Allah and His angels and His messengers and Gabriel and Michael - then indeed, Allah is an enemy to the disbelievers.”²⁶

This is a clear act of betrayal—in secular, nationalist terminology, this crime and sin is called “treason,” and in Islamic terminology it is called *ridda*, or apostasy.

Leaving the matter to the political left alone would be inefficient, because while it is highly effective in cultivating a web of spies, agents, and defectors from among the ranks of the Muslims, it leaves too much freedom for the Muslims to spread their *dawah*, the call to the truth. It is indeed the truth, and as such the rate at which people enter the truth would be alarming to anyone whose worldly status depends on sin and depravity, as is the case for most of the wealthy elite of the modern world system.

As such, it is necessary to use more direct methods to push the people away from obedience to Allah, which is the political right’s specialty.

If we took the analogy of the “good cop-bad cop” interrogation method, the political right turns up the heat in the interrogation room, and puts the prisoner under pressure, making them sweat until they are suffering from severe thirst. Then the “good cop” of the political left enters the room, offering a drink of sweetened poison.

26. Surah al-Baqarah: 98

Is Islam Incompatible with Western Society?

Islam is a religion of justice, and justice is the basis of peace. The reason Islam is incompatible with modern society is because Islam will never guide its adherents to accept injustice as the status quo. And the fact that injustice is the foundation of the modern world system is why we will never see this system achieve peace on a global level. Rather, we have an illusion of peace in some regions maintained by a state of war in others. And this peace is only on the surface. The inner spiritual reality is not one of peace, but of emptiness.

The foundation of the modern world system is rooted firmly in colonialism. This is a method of organization which divided the world's people into racial and national categories and which survives by exploiting those that are allotted a lower position in this hierarchy.

The excess of resources resulting from this exploitation and unjust distribution of resources makes new forms of political organization possible. This is why we saw the development of the modern state only well after a massive transfer of resources was underway by means of European maritime imperialism. Also visible at this time was a clear trend of revival of Greek and Roman culture and values.

Greece and Rome: the Origin of the Modern Western Tradition

It can be helpful to look at ancient Greek society to understand the development of the modern state. Modern society, and particularly democracy, traces its most important components back to ancient Greece. This is very apparent in the art, architecture, and literature that emerged during the period which Europeans dubbed "the renaissance."

The Athenian democracy, viewed as model by modernist, Western thinkers, was dependent on a social order quite similar to the modern order. A large underclass of slaves was necessary to free up enough time for the civic duties of citizens. What is also important to note is that it was impossible for a slave to become a full citizen. Only those born of two Athenian parents were eligible for citizenship.

The Roman empire, which was another major influence for modern society, had a similar structure, whereby wealth was taken from conquered areas and transferred to the center of the empire to maintain the administration.

Taxation of conquered provinces was heavy, and was a major source of revenue for the provision of services in the core Roman provinces.

The modern global order is inspired by this system. Judiciary and governmental bureaucracies are not cheap to maintain and operate, and require considerable surpluses. Judges, lawyers, politicians, activists, journalists, and police and military do not produce the basic necessities of life like clothes, food, and shelter, so someone has to do it for them.

One of the main differences between the Roman and Greek systems and modern governance is that slavery is replaced with alternate mechanisms. In modern society, slavery is largely replaced with machines and imports. Mobilizing labor by means of coercion is still alive and well, although economic violence, rather than physical violence is more commonly used now than in the past.

Modern Slavery through Outsourcing

It is clear that the production of machines in our era is a global affair. If you break down the components that make up a washing machine, a car, or the machinery that extracts our gasoline, natural gas, or coal, we find a vast network spanning dozens of countries with thousands upon thousands of workers providing these things to us.

On the surface, it certainly appears that a washing machine reduces the amount of work required for maintaining a household. But if we look at the entire supply chain that built and transported the washing machine, and the machinery that built and transported every component that was involved in constructing and transporting every piece of the washing machine, it's a bit more difficult to say just how much labor has been saved relative to having a slave wash the clothes.

For example, many metals are mined in Africa, Latin America, or India under conditions that would be unimaginable in Europe or North America. Some miners work 10 or 12 hour days, and sometimes longer, under unsafe conditions, and are paid the equivalent of less than a few dollars a day. The

same goes for many factory workers that produce clothing or household goods for wealthier “modern” societies.

In a way, the present circumstance is worse than slavery, because in slavery the basic necessities of life— food, shelter and security— are generally provided to the slave . And yet today, in most countries it is easy to find wage laborers who work long hours and still struggle to afford housing and nutrition, and who live in unsafe neighborhoods.

Inequality through Citizenship

Once you understand that modern industrial and post-industrial civilization is fundamentally based on severe injustice, it's easy to understand why Islam doesn't mesh well with the present world order.

One of the points of tension is the notion of citizenship. Modern citizenship based on nationality is essentially the modern equivalent of a caste system. Islam, on the other hand, established a system of citizenship based on belief which allows anyone to become a citizen based only on their profession of faith, regardless of their race or origin.

Imagine what would happen to the European or American economy if anyone could become a citizen just by making a public statement that they believe in American or European values!

As it is, to become a European or American citizen, you have to go through an expensive and time consuming process. Just to enter their lands, you have to either pay a lot of money to get a visa or risk your life by entering illegally. Then you have to live and work for years inside of the country and submit to the legal and judicial system. This is much more similar to the Roman concept, where citizenship could be gained through military service.

It's ironic, because ostensibly the defining values of these cultures are the principles of freedom and equality, and yet something as basic as the freedom to travel and work for a living where you wish is violently restricted on the basis of national origin, which in most cases is ethnically determined.

Issues of Sustainability

Islam prohibits both injustice against others and injustice against one's own self. Western civilization in its present form is dependent on unsustainable exploitation, depletion, and destruction of both renewable and non-renewable resources. Since we are dependent for our lives on these resources, this is a severe form of injustice, both against ourselves and in particular against future generations.

People are starting to become aware of this problem, and are attempting to adapt. But it's too little, too late—the West propelled itself to dominance on a narrative of their own superiority, and as a result almost everyone in the world wants to imitate a Western lifestyle. This is stretching the biosphere to a breaking point.

It is actually Islam's emphasis on justice, truthfulness, and consideration for the well being of all living things as well as future generations that makes it incompatible with modern society.

Islam is not opposed to technological progress, but this progress cannot be gained by means of injustice, and new technologies must be implemented methodically and gradually, taking into accounts the effect on ecology and future generations, rather than rushing them out in a mad drive for profits.

Islam is a Complete System

Islam is not entirely incompatible with the modern system—many of the basic principles of the Renaissance Enlightenment era were actually derived from Islam, including the concept of fundamental rights, which in turn inspired the US constitution.

The economic system that developed as a result of extensive implementation of Islamic law generated a level of security, stability, and prosperity across an unprecedented expanse of territory, and that prosperity led to a golden age in knowledge and science that enabled all of the technological progress that we enjoy today.

A key difference between Islam as a system of governance and the modern world system is adaptability. Islam provides a complete system of governance

that can be implemented regardless of the availability of resources, at the level of a village, or regionally, or globally, and is completely sustainable.

By contrast, the American and European system affords certain privileges to a limited number of citizens and residents in the wealthier parts of the empire, but is dependent on an unsustainable level of social and ecological exploitation. Some misguided individuals regard the Islamic punishments for crimes such as drug dealing or adultery as excessive, but this is generally because they don't truly understand the fact that healthy families raise healthy individuals, and healthy individuals make a peaceful and prosperous world.

In other words, the modern system of governance is based upon a tiered hierarchy that privileges some regions at the expense of others, while Islam establishes uniform rights across all of the lands under its dominion.

On the Alleged “Barbarity” of Sharia

In the West, we are conditioned to view the punishments prescribed by Islamic law as barbaric, but if we really take a deep look at the reality of the prison system of the United States, it's impossible to argue that it's superior to sharia. Aside from the horrific emotional and psychological mutilation that takes place in American prisons, they are breeding grounds for particularly vicious strains of mental illness which spill out in the form of a very high rate of violent crime.

This huge pool of tortured individuals is like a Sword of Damocles hanging over the head of society, because these prisons are expensive to maintain, and a budget shortfall would undoubtedly mean that prison breaks would become much more common. This means in the event of a severe contraction of the American economy, there would be a lot of really scary and disturbed individuals who would inevitably be loosed and would likely bring about a very troubled anarchy.

Broad awareness of this problem is part of what drives people's willingness to support violent means to maintain the economic status of the United States. It's much easier to accept invading other countries and slaughtering tens of thousands than to actually confront the problems that you have hidden from sight and locked away to avoid facing them. So in addition to the horrific human toll of American prisons, we have to add the violence that is initiated against other countries to maintain the economic status quo that makes these prisons possible.

You will also notice that a lot of the criticism of Islam is not actually based in a well-rounded understanding, but rather focuses on a few issues that are taken out of context. For example, in the case of amputating the hand of the thief, Western discussion of the topic rarely mentions that the amputation only takes place for theft of a large amount of money, well above the amount needed for survival.

Also usually excluded from the discussion is that it is implemented in the context of an Islamic welfare system which provides the basic necessities to all of the members of society.

People accuse religions and Islam for being responsible for wars, but the reality is that most of the deaths by conflict of the last hundred years have

been because of nationalism, tribalism, resources, and eugenics derived from evolutionary biology. And the bulk of this violence was caused by a sociopathic elite that maintains a considerable level of control over all of the world's nations by a system of interest based debt.

This strange hold on power would clearly be very much threatened by the rise of an Islamic system which explicitly forbids interest.

This same elite also control a majority share of the media, including the publishing houses that issue many school books, news networks, Hollywood, newspapers, and so forth, which contributes to many of us developing a very negative view of Islam. This is unfortunate because in reality Islam contains practical steps to resolving many of the most serious problems facing humanity today, including the breakdown of families, financial crises, drug addiction, racism, homelessness, unemployment, as well as a host of mental illnesses resulting from all of these simultaneous crises.

On Self-Defense

Defending your people is a sacred duty, and those who put their lives on the line to defend their community deserve honor and respect for their sacrifices. Many who do not serve in the military take this for granted. It is easy to be unaware of the powerful link there is between the sacrifices of armed forces members and their own safety, security, and the protection of their rights.

This goes not only for Americans, but for ungrateful and snide Europeans, many of whom criticize and mock the same segments of society that fill the ranks of the American military that protects them and makes it possible for them to afford their expensive social programs.

At the same time, the hard reality is that the American way of life is not worth defending. It is clearly on a track of wastefulness, alienation, and overconsumption that causes vast misery both to Americans and to the victims of the foreign policy necessary to sustain this way of life.

Anyone who cares a bit for the men and women serving in the armed forces should honor them by acquainting themselves with the fact that the military has become a tool for serving the interests of a completely degenerate and sociopathic elite who maintains the grip on power regardless of who has been elected, and informing others about this reality.

Anyone who is aware of this reality cannot morally justify continuing to financially or intellectually support the federal government as long as this remains the case. If you do, you share in the shedding of blood, both of the misguided youth sent to die on false pretexts, and their victims.

To stop financially supporting the government, it is necessary to stop paying taxes and avoid whatever participation in the formal economy possible. This means to engage in direct barter and gifting as much as possible, and avoid using dollars as much as possible.

To stop intellectually supporting the government, it is necessary to disavow identity constructs that reinforce the nation's power. Identity constructs include the name America, the American flag, the borders of the United States, the public school system, and any media or institutions that acknowledge these constructs.

We should train ourselves to know that all of these things are based on lies and are contrary to our own best interests, and we should treat them as we would treat plague, poison, or asbestos laden houses.

Alternative identity constructs are necessary, but tribalism based purely on kinship ties cannot compete with nationalism. Decentralized, local governments are a good alternative, but for a common defense, they require some kind of union. This was the original vision of the United States, but this vision has gone horribly and irreparably wrong—if it ever had any merit to begin with.

Islam is an alternative unifying identity based on universal spiritual values, and is in fact the only ideological system capable of withstanding the onslaught of corruption currently facing humanity.

On Wealth Tax

There is a great wisdom in the wealth tax because it acts as an incentive to investment rather than hoarding, which is part of what causes the economic growth. Income tax, by contrast, acts as a punishment for success - meaning that people pay more taxes the more money they make regardless of whether they spend it or not.

This means that people who are living day to day or paycheck to paycheck end up paying taxes, and rich people find loopholes to escape taxes. This is partly a problem with democracy, because in a democracy any legislation can be changed. In Islam the wealth tax is written into the Quran which is indisputably regarded as immutable and unchangeable by all the world's Muslims.

This, I believe is a large part of the reason that the global elite of ultra-rich are funding a global war against any society that is actually trying to implement Islamic legislation.

The Qur'an as a Source of Joy

It was the first year I fasted the whole of Ramadan. I had just learned how to read Arabic, and I remember sitting in the mosque at night, and it seemed like there was this incredible light coming off the pages of the book. I would describe it like sparkling ultra purity. And just the experience of seeing this almost made me cry because I knew that I was looking at the truth from the Creator of the universe, and that it was by His will that I was being allowed to realize this truth and experience it.

As I spent more time reciting the Qur'an in the mosque, I didn't realize what most of the words meant, but as I became better able to read them, I started naturally to recite more rhythmically and melodically. I remember one moment after an extended period of recitation where I was mysteriously flooded with joy, almost as if I had gotten an intravenous injection of euphoria, except it was an ecstasy tinged with complex emotion rather than a raw chemical high, although at this time I was entirely sober. I really didn't know where it came from, but I guess I realized at this point that the Qur'an can be a miraculous wellspring of joy. I have experienced this only rarely, however, and I think it takes patience, humility, and concentration to unlock its secrets.

The better my relationship with the Qur'an is, the better everything in my life goes, and the happier I am, no matter what difficulties I am facing. I guess it is an embodiment of love and compassion from the One who provided us with everything that we love. It's amazing that so many people reject it and ignore it, myself included. It's easy to get distracted.

Reflection on Surah Fatihah

Surah Fatihah is the first *surah* of the Qur'an. The word *surah* can mean literally several things. Investigating the roots of words can be really fun. Some of the definitions of the word *surah* include:

- With regards to a building: good, high, beautiful.
- With regards to a wall: The base from which a wall rises. Technical term: foundation or footing.
- It can also refer to the high standing of something.
- An indication, symbol or mark.

Practically, it refers to a chapter of the Qur'an. But the metaphorical meaning is very beautiful. The Qur'an, in the Islamic tradition, is the basis of all knowledge. It is also a significant part of the basis of modern understandings of medicine, history, sociology, psychology, philosophy, finance and banking, chemistry, optics, mathematics, astronomy and navigation, and physics, as well as the political philosophy of the European Enlightenment which gave rise to the American constitution. The very concept of fundamental, inalienable rights originally entered European discourse by way of Islamic scholarship.

So this reference to the basis of a building or wall is apt. This is apt not only in terms of world intellectual and political history, but also in the life of each individual Muslim, as well as Muslim families and communities.

The other definitions are interesting because they could refer to levels or steps, which could mean that with each surah we complete that we ascend to another level. As far as the reference to a symbol, it could also refer to the fact that there are often layers of meaning within a single surah; a symbol is something which condenses a large amount of meaning into a smaller space. Indeed, the Arabic language, having adapted for the desert environment, is particularly suited to condense a large amount of meaning into a few words, since speaking uses up water. The Quran is unrivaled in the ability to present information that always delivers new insight with each reading- it is like a wellspring of light, wisdom, and knowledge that never runs dry.

Fatiha literally means opening, most obviously because it is the beginning of the Quran. *Fath* can also mean conquest- it is the same word used for the conquering of a city or land. This could relate to the definition of Islam,

which means to be in a state of submission or surrender to the truth. I suppose this goes against the American spirit of independence to some extent, but I feel that our love of independence comes originally from living under horrible rulers for centuries. But really, living under a just and powerful ruler is much preferable to being isolated but free, because with isolation comes a natural feeling of insecurity. After all, our basic nature is to be in groups, which requires to some extent sacrificing our individual preferences.

There are obviously some negative connotations in American thought with the word conquest, due to the mostly hypocritical neo-Christian/Hindu doctrine of non-violence. However, the word used for conquering a city or country in American propaganda is “liberation,” which has pretty universally positive connotations in American thought. It is thus “liberation” from illusion, even if it means our egos submit and open to the conquest of the truth. It is accepting the truth of the revelation and submitting to it in our everyday lives, and the result is that we no longer rely on ourselves but we rely on our Creator, the All Powerful.

This doesn't mean that we give up making efforts, but we relinquish the idea that the outcome of our efforts depends on our own performance- after all, there are so many factors outside our control. A perfectly executed job can be an utter failure due to external factors, and a very haphazard implementation of a plan can be totally successful with the help of serendipitous external factors. As such, the meaning of “opening” could also mean submission to a higher conscious force than ourselves and freedom from confusion about the nature of Creator or from false notions about the nature of divinity, as well as the anxiety that goes along with not understanding the nature of the Creator and the anxiety of feeling the need to control things beyond one's own power. Indeed, if we become trapped in such a mindset, we are enslaved by our own insatiable desire to control our situation.

Another sense of the word opening is that of existence itself. When a baby is born, the cervix dilates, or opens, to accommodate the passage of the baby into the world outside of the womb. Metaphorically speaking, in both the Bible and Quran, the comparison of those who have faith to those who do not is compared to the likeness between the living and the dead.

For one entering into faith, the first step is often to learn the Surah Fatiha. Many people have religious experiences where they realize the presence of a

conscious force in all things, and this experience can be profound, but it is common for people to forget it and be distracted by things that are ultimately actually trivial. The Arabic word for “human” comes from the same root as the word for “to forget.” Hence the importance of having a verbal formula that can remind us of these profound experiences when we are in a situation where we are more removed from the moments of deep realization or epiphany.

So the Surah Fatihah is repeated in every unit of every prayer in the life of a Muslim. As such, it is the first prayer that a new Muslim learns to recite, as well as the most important part of renewing and maintaining your faith. For this reason, perhaps the meaning of the word “opening” could alternately relate to the passage into life, or metaphorically the passage from ignorance into knowledge and understanding, or the passage from disbelief into faith.

The Significance of the Number 7 and the Structure of the Universe

There are seven verses in Surah Fatiha. The number of 7 is well known as a number with special significance. The number 1 is a name and attribute of Allah, and an odd number. If we consider that 1 is the basis of all other integers, the basis of the creation would be 2.

The universe is defined by binary pairs- light and dark, life and death, up and down, left and right, love and hate, happiness and sadness; duality is the basic fabric of the universe. 3 follows 1, being the union of 1 and 2, and is the first odd number after 1 itself. 7 is a 1 flanked by a pair of 3's.

Allah describes the universe as seven heavens stacked on top of each other. Perhaps this is literal, perhaps it is referring to various levels of non-material reality that can be traversed by beings like angels. This knowledge is with Allah, and it is sufficient for us to be in awe of his Creation and to praise him.

Only a fool would think that we could ever encompass the totality of reality with our tiny human brains. It is said that the more knowledge a person gains, the more they become aware of their own ignorance.

Above the seven heavens is the *kursi* of Allah, and above the *kursi* is the

arsh. *Kursi* translates literally to the “footstool” and *arsh* to “throne.” Suffice to say, they are not a literal footstool and throne, but they refer to that which is above the heavens, but below Allah. This may not be a literal sense of direction as in the sense of up above the sky, but it could mean above in the same sense that as the second dimension, incorporating another layer of possibility, is above the first dimension, and the third dimension above the second. Allah knows, while we can only speculate as to the exact meaning.

A narration from the Prophet, upon him be prayer and peace, describes the *kursi* as being greater in size than the combined seven heavens. For reference, the first of the seven heavens is the material plane that includes planets and stars and nebulae and black holes, galaxies and galactic clusters. The other six may be of a nature less apparent to us, and may have some relation to other dimensions, and Allah knows best.

Ibn Jareer said: "Yoonus told me that Ibn Wahb informed him that Ibn Zaid said: "My father told me: "Allah's Messenger said: *"The seven heavens are no more in comparison to the Kursi than seven dirhams set in a shield."*"

Abu Zarr (radhi Allahu anhu) said: "I heard Allah's Messenger say: *"The Kursi is no more in comparison to the 'Arsh (Throne) than an iron ring thrown in a vast desert."*"

A dirham is a silver coin usually a bit smaller than a quarter, whereas a shield would be much larger, perhaps an arms length in width.

There are 7 points of the human body that touch the earth or floor in prostration- two feet, two hand, two knees, and the forehead.

Bismillah: In the name of God

(بِسْمِ اللَّهِ)

Surah al Fatiha and the Quran itself begin with *Bismillah*, which I would translate as “In the name of the One and Only Divinity.”

The prefix *bi* in Arabic could mean “in” “with” or “by.” *Isma* means “name.”

The word *Allah* is composed of *al*, the article, and *ilah*, which is related to the Hebrew “*EI*” or “*ilah*” which are used to describe divinities. If I were to say “a tree” you would know I am referring to a single tree, but if I were to say “the tree,” in a general sense, you would know that I am talking about trees in general, as a concept, as in “the tree is the largest plant in the forest ecosystem.” *Allah*, in Arabic, unambiguously denotes “the divinity” in such a way that there can be no plural of it.

The plural of *ilah*, because of the way plurals are formed in Arabic, would not be *ilahs*, but rather *alihah*, so there is no possible plural of Allah. If we consider the formation of early deities, they were often invented in attempts to explain natural phenomena. Lightning and thunder are one of the most impressive phenomena in nature, so in many cultures, lightning and thunder was considered to be one of the strongest manifestations of divine power. The most powerful deity of many pantheons is the god of thunder- the words for “God” in Latin, French, and Spanish (Deus, Dios, Dieu) are all derived from the Greek “Zeus”.

The word Allah itself is an affirmation that true divinity is free from all phenomena, although it is present in the workings of all things. By affirming the unity of all divinity, we affirm that no natural phenomena can encompass divinity. Things like lighting, volcanoes, love, and fertility will cease to exist as the universe ceases to exist, but the One that created these things and maintains the parameters of the physical reality in which they exist, will remain.

The full introductory phrase is *Bismillahi Rahmani Rahim*. The literal writing of it would look more like bismillah al Rahman al Rahim- this is again the article “al” which is kind of like “the.” Rahman and Rahim are

both derived from the root of rahm, which literally means “womb”. So whereas the pagan religions take their fundamental ideas of divinity from fertility, the hunt, or the weather and lighting, the description of divinity here is that of the love, mercy and compassion of a mother for her child.

Nietzsche described this dynamic in his theory of the genealogy of morality. He characterized the Judeo-Christian tradition as a slave morality, or a religion of the weak, because of the emphasis on kindness, charity, and mercy. His theory was that it was developed by the Jews due to their captivity in Egypt. By contrast, paganism is a religion that valued strength and power more than mercy.

There are not really any atheists. Everyone believes in something, so we can also understand a deity or *ilah* as the most revered principle. An *ilah* is not just what we understand the truth to be, or the source of phenomena, but also the source from which we derive our values, and thereby our conceptions of ethics.

For most who claim to be atheists, the reality is that they worship humanity on different levels. If you ask them about what they consider the most noble human action is, they will often speak of some work for the benefit of humanity. Humanity is something bigger than themselves that they can observe, and yet they are part of it. By honoring actions that serve humanity, they shape a norm of service for humanity, and by extension service for themselves or their progeny.

So utility becomes the highest value, and the best way of arriving at an understanding of what optimum utility is human reason in this view.

The fact that the first phrase in the Quran mentions two derivatives of the word “womb” demonstrates the deference and honor given to the feminine principle in Islam. The notion of Allah, or the highest value, and the first way that we remember and conceptualize Allah in every prayer, relates directly to the strongest common bond of all humans; the mother.

Alhamdulillahi Rabbil alamin

(الْحَمْدُ لِلّٰهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ)

The second phrase is “alhamdulillahi rabbil a’lamin.”

Al hamd means the praise, or the thanks. Praise is recognition of excellence or greatness, and thanks is acknowledgment of some favor and an expression of appreciation, and it’s beautiful to include these two sentiments in one word. Again, this uses the article “al” which means praise in a general and unified sense. It could be understood to mean all praise, as well. Ultimately, the Source of everything is the One to whom all praise and thanks ultimately belong.

Rabb literally means Lord, Sustainer, Cherisher, or Master. I suppose we could imagine this like the good kings of old legends- a lord who provides for us, protects us, and whom we serve.

This runs against the logic of democracy, but vestiges of the tradition remain. In a way, America was essentially a project of trying to have everyone be a king. Take the lawn, for example.

The lawn was originally a way for the British aristocracy to display their wealth- the amount of extra manpower they had available to trim ornamental fields of grass was a way of displaying their wealth and status, and was reserved for the ultra-elite. Now, in America, everyone can have their little estate and feel like a little aristocrat.

I suppose the bankers would be the lords of America now. Think about the importance of banks. Just about everyone who has a decent standard of living has a bank account. Most people depend on their relationship to the bank for their food, their clothing, and their shelter. And most people serve the banks by means of loans.

Of course, theoretically, we could do everything with cash and not have a bank account, but almost no one does, because banks, as the most powerful and influential institutions in the society, have shaped the economic order in such a way that they are indispensable. Most people depend on banks for their jobs, because banks generate most of the currency, and therefore

economic activity that drives the economy.

Construction is one of the main drivers of the economy, and many, if not most, construction projects are financed by banks. Banks finance student loans for educating skilled workers, which also keep colleges and universities in business.

The main profitability of the healthcare industry, currently the mainstay of the American economy and one of the best performing index in major hedge funds, depends on insurance, and the profitability of insurance companies depends on rolling over capital reserves with funds owned by bankers. The biggest and most ostentatious buildings also usually belong to banks.

It is no wonder that people tend to worship money. Externally, it appears to be the source of our food which sustains us, our homes that shelter us, our clothing which gives us comfort and social status. It means being able to pursue the things that make us happy, including sharing meals with our families and loved ones. It would certainly appear that if we did not have money, that we could lose all these things that are so fundamental to our lives.

The purpose of this is to illustrate that the banks are for modern society what the feudal lords were for medieval society. What we believe the financial system to be, is actually what Allah is- our source of Sustenance, and the one who we serve. It would seem that our lives are directed by the dictates of banknotes issued by the false lords- we spend most of our time doing things mainly because we believe that it will result in us getting money, whereas we neglect other activities will not get us any money.

The difference is that feudal lords were legitimated as representatives of God on earth, so the people believed that by obeying and serving their lord, they were obeying and serving the Almighty Creator. With the modern financial system, money usurps the position that rightly belongs to God.

It is not a coincidence that the Bible and Quran speak of the tribe of Israel worshiping a statue of a golden calf. Livestock were one of the earliest forms of currency. Neither statues nor money have any ability to benefit or harm us, and thus it is an utter injustice to ascribe properties of lordship to such items.

It is absolutely possible to be full of joy and utterly fulfilled with no property or wealth, and it is likewise possible to be completely miserable as a multi-millionaire. It may seem as if that which our hearts desire comes from money, but in reality it comes from Allah.

We may openly reject the dominion of the financial establishment, but most of us still use dollars. We feed the economy with each meal we eat and every mile we drive. So it could be said that although we might deny the lordship of the financial establishment, it is still our worldly lord. Most of us still have a relationship with banks, ATM's, and debit cards for the meals we eat and the rent, mortgage, or property tax we pay. And this lordship ought to be rendered to Allah, and every recitation of Surah Al Fatiha is a reminder of that fact.

In the same sense, someone may deny Allah, but it is still Allah that decides how many breaths and heartbeats they are allotted, and when they will die, and even those who are rebellious towards the Creator still unwittingly work to bring about the fulfillment of destiny, of the divine plan.

The difference is that the Lordship of Allah is absolute and total, whereas the lordship of the financial establishment is really very limited. The worldly lords are continuously trying to increase their influence in an effort to compete with Allah and control more and more, and to direct people's energy and worship away from Allah, the infinite, and towards the finite. And this is precisely how the devil is described in the Quran.

قَالَ فِيمَا أَغْوَيْتَنِي لَاَقْدُنَّ لَهُمْ صِرَاطَكَ الْمُسْتَقِيمَ ثُمَّ لَا تَنَاهِنُمْ مِنْ بَيْنِ أَيْدِيهِمْ
وَمِنْ خَلْفِهِمْ وَعَنْ أَيْمَانِهِمْ وَعَنْ شَمَائِلِهِمْ ۖ وَلَا تَجِدُ أَكْثَرَهُمْ شَاكِرِينَ

[Satan] said, "Because You have put me in error, I will surely sit in wait for them on Your straight path. Then I will come to them from before them and from behind them and on their right and on their left, and You will not find most of them grateful [to You]."²⁷

So we can see that the methodology of the financial establishment is exactly the methodology of the devil, because it is a source of diverting human beings from their true purpose, which is worshiping the Creator. And as we

27. Surah al-Araf: 16-17

know from the Bible, the majority of the people are diverted by this trick.²⁸

This trial can get pretty heavy- for example, in Iraq, the US offers large amounts of money, military protection, and visas to anyone who will work for them, which allows those who betray their neighbors and family to escape a war zone. So people may believe that this money can represent safety for them, although they know that to betray and kill innocent people is morally wrong, they may be willing to do something that they know is wrong, because their belief in the power of the money and the privileges of working with the US occupation is more powerful than the power of Allah.

The truth is that someone may betray their family to get a visa to the US and be killed in an accident in the US, whereas if they had stayed in Iraq they might have survived all of the hardship.

Likewise, in a place like America, a person might recognize the harm of a materialistic society and turn to spirituality, but they might, in the process, develop a sense of superiority, arrogance, and condescension towards others which could be more spiritually harmful than the materialism was in the first place. Part of the danger of such an inner disease is that it makes the truth look bad in the eyes of others and can repel people from otherwise beneficial teachings.

Neither religion, holy texts, prayer, nor money, weapons, or power afford any protection or benefit except by the permission of Allah. Many are those who pray and study holy texts and do not benefit from it, and many are those who have wealth and power and do not benefit from it.

We must recognize the Lordship of Allah, that he has dominion over all things, and we must recognize that we are indeed His servants and that we are in need of him, and we must seek his mercy by striving to know him, be aware of him, to cultivate a connection with him, and to obey him, and to do anything that can bring His mercy upon us, such as giving charity, caring for orphans, avoiding harming people or seeking to protect innocent people from injustice, and increasing our awareness of Him by being constant in his mention, studying the revelation and its commands, and striving to implement them in our lives.

28. Matthew 7:13

عَنْ عَائِشَةَ رَوْجِ النَّبِيِّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ أَنَّهَا كَانَتْ تَقُولُ قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ (سَدِّدُوا وَقَارُبُوا وَأَبْشِرُوا فَإِنَّهُ لَنْ يُدْخِلَ الْجَنَّةَ أَحَدًا عَمَلَهُ قَالُوا وَلَا أَنْتَ يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ قَالَ وَلَا أَنَا إِلَّا أَنْ يَتَعَمَّدَنِي اللَّهُ مِنْهُ بِرَحْمَةٍ وَاعْلَمُوا أَنَّ أَحَبَّ الْعَمَلِ إِلَى اللَّهِ أَدْوَمُهُ وَإِنْ قَ

Aisha reported: The Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, said, “Be deliberate in worship, draw near to Allah, and give glad tidings. Verily, none of you will enter Paradise because of his deeds alone.” They said, “Not even you, O Messenger of Allah?” The Prophet said, “Not even me, unless Allah grants me mercy from himself. Know that the most beloved deed to Allah is that which is done regularly even if it is small.”

Lordship entails not only mercy, kindness, and generosity, but also punishment. If we do not obey the worldly lords, we are threatened with exclusion from benefits, prison, or death. Worldly lords may seek to impose their will upon us by means of rewards and punishments, regardless of the justice or injustice of their laws and commands. In the same way, the Quran describes the Pharaoh, the archetype of the unjust and false ruler, as asserting his Lordship over the people.

فَكَذَّبَ وَعَصَى
ثُمَّ أَدْبَرَ يَسْعَى
فَحَشَرَ فَنَادَى
فَقَالَ أَنَا رَبُّكُمُ الْأَعْلَى

But Pharaoh denied and disobeyed.

Then he turned his back, striving.

And he gathered [his people] and called out

And said, "I am your most exalted lord."²⁹

29. Surah An-Nazi'at: 21-24

So the first line of Surah Al Fatihah is affirming that Allah is the One and Only, and that He is the Lord of al a'lamin.

What is the a'lamin? Sometimes this is translated as the universe, sometimes it is translated as “the worlds,” sometimes it is translated as human beings and jinn, jinn being a word that denotes different varieties of invisible beings. These invisible beings may be related to the kami of Japanese mythology, the elves of Germanic lore, the faeries of Irish tales, or the duendes of Spanish and Latin American legend. It could even include beings from other planets, as some have pointed to the verse from Surah Rahman: 33

يَا مَعْشَرَ الْجِنِّ وَالْإِنْسِ إِنْ اسْتَطَعْتُمْ أَنْ تَنْفُذُوا مِنْ أَفْطَارِ
السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ فَانْفُذُوا لَا تَنْفُذُونَ إِلَّا بِسُلْطَانٍ

O company of jinn and men, if ye have power to penetrate (all) regions of the heavens and the earth; then penetrate (them)! Ye will never penetrate them save with (Our) sanction.

Some modern interpretations have suggested that it could be possible for these to traverse the heavens with the permission of Allah. And Allah knows best.

The point is simply to say that there are different translations of al a'lamin, but the best definition probably would be the cosmos, including all living beings, angels, planets, stars, and other parts of the universe for which there may be no words in any human language. In short, it is the entirety of creation, everything that exists.

The root of “a'lamin” is ع ل م , which is also the root of the Arabic word for “knowledge.”

Just contemplating upon this word has tremendous effects, and it is a clarification of the absolute nature of the Lordship of Allah, in whose name we began the prayer. So it directs us towards an understanding of the power and majesty of the Ever Living, never sleeping Creator, and the fact that He has power over all things.

This word also causes us to contemplate the vastness of the universe, and by mentioning less visible aspects of the universe it reminds us of the limitations

of our understanding, while still leaving us in awe of the vastness of the beauty and complexity of that which we can perceive. And since this verse itself is a direct communication from the Creator, we are reminded that, in spite of our seeming insignificance in this vastness, the glory and dominion of the Lord is such that we can speak directly to Him at any time, and be heard and answered.

Ar Rahmani Rahim

(الرَّحْمَنُ الرَّحِيمُ)

The following verse is a repetition of ar-Rahmani ar-Rahim. This makes sense, because we have just been reminded of the vast power and might of the Lord Almighty, so we are subsequently reminded of a softer or feminine, aspect of the Lord. And indeed, there is something intrinsically feminine about the womb, which is the root of both *ar rahman* and *ar rahim*.

This verse, in relation to the preceding two verses, reflects a fundamental principle of the nature of Allah. The beginning references the mercy of Allah, which is the default condition. Humans tend to take the mercy for granted, and as a result transgress. As a result they are faced with the power and lordship of Allah, and then, in many cases, turn repentant, and find the mercy of their Lord again.

When we are reminded of Allah's power, it makes sense that we are also reminded of His mercy and compassion. This existence is a gift, there truly is a lot of potential in it, both for experiencing beauty and happiness in this life and after this life, so it truly amazing just to be alive. And the portal through which we enter this world is the womb. It is said that from Allah we come and to Allah we return:

إِنَّا لِلَّهِ وَإِنَّا إِلَيْهِ رَاجِعُونَ

Indeed, from Allah we come and to Him we return.³⁰

The fact that we are alive, when there are so many millions of factors that could cripple us or end our lives at any time is truly amazing. We are in fact surrounded by the mercy of Allah at all times and sustained by it, and yet the mercy of Allah is much greater than what we experience on earth. The Prophet ﷺ relates in a hadith:

دَثَّنَا حَرْمَلَةُ بْنُ يَحْيَى التَّحْبِيُّ، أَخْبَرَنَا ابْنُ وَهْبٍ، أَخْبَرَنِي يُونُسُ، عَنْ ابْنِ شِهَابٍ، أَنَّ سَعِيدَ بْنَ الْمُسَيَّبَ، أَخْبَرَهُ أَنَّ أَبَا هُرَيْرَةَ قَالَ سَمِعْتُ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ

30. Surah al-Baqarah: 156

صَلَى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ يَقُولُ "جَعَلَ اللَّهُ الرَّحْمَةَ مِائَةً جُزًّا فَأَمْسَكَ عِنْدَهُ سِتُّونَ جُزًّا وَتَسْعَيْنَ وَأَنْزَلَ فِي الْأَرْضِ جُزًّا وَاحِدًا فَمِنْ ذَلِكَ الْجُزْءِ تَنَزَّلُ الْحَلَاقُ حَتَّى تَرْفَعَ الدَّابَّةُ حَافِرَهَا عَنْ وَلَدِهَا حَشْيَةً أَنْ تُصِيبَهُ

Narrated Abu Huraira (رضي الله عنه): "I heard Allah's Apostle ﷺ saying, 'Allah divided Mercy into one-hundred parts and kept ninety-nine parts of it with Him and sent down one part on earth. And because of that, its one single part, His creations are Merciful to each other, so that even the mare lifts up its hoofs away from its baby animal, lest it should trample on it.'"³¹

So it is useful to be reminded of Allah's mercy and compassion in this world that makes our existence possible, and Allah has set all of the parameters of our reality just so that we may live and exist, and it is also beneficial to remember that we are in need of this mercy in life to come as well, and that in fact the mercy we will find, Allah willing, on the last day, is even greater.

This pattern of alternation is repeated again in the transition to the next verse, which returns to the manifest power of the Creator, and the active, masculine principle, as opposed to the subtle, feminine principle.

31. Sahih Muslim 2752 a

Maliki yawmi din

(مَالِكٌ يَوْمَ الدِّينِ)

Malik literally means king or ruler. The difference between this and *Rabb*, or Lord, appears to be that *Rabb* has more of a connotation of being a provider and a sustainer, whereas *Malik* refers more to the quality of rulership exclusively. And this distinction makes sense when we consider the context of this verse relative to the verse mentioning lordship.

Yawm means day, but it can mean an age, an epoch, or a period of time, as well. It is said that the experience of the day of Judgment would be similar to fifty thousand of our years in an authentic hadith, so it should not be regarded as a literal day night cycle.

اللَّهُ بَيْنَ عِبَادِهِ فِي يَوْمٍ كَانَ مِقْدَارُهُ خَمْسِينَ أَلْفَ سَنَةٍ

*“Allah would pronounce judgment among His servants, during a day the extent of which would be fifty thousand years.”*³²

Din, in the Islamic context, refers to a way of life. It is often translated as “religion,” but its roots it can refer to either judgment, custom, or religion. These concepts are all connected, since our judgments about right and wrong determine what our course of action will be, and what our way of life will be, both as individuals and communities.

A legal judgment, as in the case of a judge ruling that a vandal do community service, is a clear example of one of the measures by which the direction of both the society and the individual is steered. This is a heavy responsibility, and the Prophet ﷺ said:

عَنْ أُبَيِّ هُرَيْزَةَ أَنَّ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ قَالَ مَنْ وَلَيَ الْقَضَاءَ
فَقَدْ دُبِحَ بِغَيْرِ سِكِّينٍ

Abu Huraira reported: The Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, said, “Whoever accepts an appointment as a judge is as if he has

32. Sahih Muslim 987 c

*been slaughtered without a knife.*³³

This illustrates the extreme difficulty of doing justice. Symbols of justice include the scale and the sword. Indeed, it is a delicate balance and a fine line.

Yawmi din, in the most apparent sense, is referring here to the end of time, also known as the day of Judgment, the day of Reckoning, or the final Judgment. This has an analogue in the mainstream cosmology of the modern era in the form of entropy. Referring to pure logic, it follows that anything that has a beginning must also have an end. In the sense of religion, referring to this event with the word “din” can also refer to the fact that we will be gathered with our communities- that is, the religious community we belong to will be one of our defining characteristics at the time of the final judgment.

It's important to realize that in Islam, as opposed to Christianity, there is a clear doctrine that there will be people from many religious communities who are among the righteous. That is to say, there is no concept that salvation is off limits to everyone born before a certain event or who is unaware of the existence of a certain Prophet.

The person who has knowledge of right and wrong is not judged equally to the one who does not know.

وَمَا كُنَّا مُعَذِّبِينَ حَتَّىٰ نَبْعَثَ رَسُولًا

“And We never punish unless We have sent a Messenger”³⁴

A part of what determines our sincerity and truthfulness is how we react when the truth becomes apparent to us, for example, with the message of Islam. And judgment on the basis of belief is natural, since actions ultimately stem from belief.

Thus, morally speaking, a final judgment is simply the completion of the equilibrium visible in nature. It is possible to observe that there is some principle of moral reciprocity in the universe, which is sometimes described

33. Sunan Abi Dawud 3571

34. Surah Al-Isra: 15

as *karma*, although the concept of *karma* has many other problems, for example the utility of the concept for reinforcing unjust hierarchies, and the notion of an indestructible soul that is independent from the physical body. But that's a discussion for another time.

Suffice to say, good actions yield good, and evil actions yield evil. Without getting into a lengthy discussion of defining good and bad, there are moral prescriptions every sane human being would recognize as good or bad, harmful or beneficial, and these actions have consequences that extend out into both time and space. Another way of expressing this is “you reap what you sow.” Or to borrow from physics: “For every action, there is an equal and opposite reaction.”

We can see that there are various systems or levels in our own lives- our house, our family, our city or village, or country, our planet. And we can see that our actions have effects on these systems, and that each of these systems affects the others, and it follows logically that eventually our actions will come back to us.

For example, if we have a housemate who we treat kindly, they are likely to return some kindness. However, we know this is not a perfectly closed system, and that our housemate's mood, which is in part affected by our actions, may affect someone else when they go out of the house, for example, to go to the store. Later, we might go to the same store and find someone who is in a good mood as a result of their earlier interaction with our housemate, and thus we would reap some of the benefits of our kind actions.

And the effects will not stop there- they will radiate out into the city, and into surrounding cities, and eventually the entire earth, and perhaps beyond. The scope of the impact of our actions is actually so large that it is impossible for our minds to truly understand the consequences of our actions. And yet somehow, just as we can observe the universe and infer that there will be a point of final physical entropy, we can view the existence of a moral dimension which may likewise be a point of final spiritual entropy.

So to be reminded of *al Malik of yawmi din*, is to affirm the knowledge that the One we are addressing with our prayer is the One who will have absolute power at the time when the reality of all of our actions will become apparent. This is also a reminder of the passage from life to death and death to life, as the Day of Judgment is also the Day of Resurrection. It is a certainty that we

will die, and to remember this Day is a reminder of a core principle of the monotheistic tradition of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam; that we will be brought back to life after our deaths, and that we will be held accountable for our actions, both good and bad.

Iyaka na a'budu wa iyaka nasta'in

(إِيَّاكَ نَعْبُدُ وَإِيَّاكَ نَسْتَعِينُ)

Iyaka is addressing the Creator. The word *iyaka* very definitely specifies that we are addressing the One who described in the previous verses, or “It is you that.”

The following word, *a'budu* means worship or service, so that is to say “It is you that we serve.”

'Abd means slave or servant. It is interesting to note that in Aramaic, Jesus' native Syriac language, the word for son and the word for servant was the same. In many cultures the service and obedience on the part of children towards their parents is natural, so the relationship of the child and parent is analogous to the relationship between servant and master. In the Bible, this metaphor of a master and servant is used in numerous parables to explain the relationship between Allah and human beings.

It is nice to have a word that combines the concepts of worship and of service. These words are used interchangeably in English in the context of religion, but it can be helpful to have a term that encompasses both.

I am always impressed when I travel through Texas how people seem to have an understanding that protecting your community with your life is a sacred duty. There are numerous people and organizations who honor US soldiers by saying things like “Thank you for your service.”

The word service implies that an action is dedicated to something or someone. Many actions may be “self-serving.” Charitable work is often dedicated to serving something larger than ourselves. Volunteer work taps into the concept, which is at the heart of all religions, that there is something noble and ultimately very beneficial to our own selves to dedicating time to helping and supporting others.

So in a way, if I say to a soldier, “Thank you for your service,” I am acknowledging that their service was on some level undertaken for my own sake. It is unfortunate, however, that many are unaware that causes US military and government personnel are actually serving is ultimately detrimental to the American people, and everyone else.

A friend of mine once described a metaphor on the topic of service. He said it would seem that you would be helping someone who is struggling with obesity and feeling unhappy by giving them a giant bag of chips, because it would make them happy and fulfill their need. But in reality, it is harming them, because in the long run it is perpetuating the same cycle that is making them miserable.

And this one reason why it is important to remember to whom our service/worship should be directed.

Americans may feel that they enjoy their high material standard of living, including things like giant cars, trucks, RV's, ATV's, dirtbikes, art galleries and college degrees that have no real practical use, imported wine and beer, European furniture, video games, movies with ever growing budgets and more spectacular special effects, international jet travel and luxury vacations, hot tubs, a seemingly endless variety of music, clothes and shoes, toilets that flush a gallon of drinking water for each use, huge houses that are heated all the time, being able to shoot thousands upon thousands of rounds of ammunition just for fun, driving hundreds of miles to go skiing or snowboarding or hiking, only eating muscle meat and not eating kidney, liver, intestines, stomach, heart, and lungs, imported dog toys, supermarkets with tens of thousands of different items, driving around alone, or keeping horses just for fun. Americans may feel that something that would take away these things is a threat to their freedom and way of life, and that they need to defend this way of life.

But if most people were aware that having these things in many cases is directly related to other people not having a place to live, clean water to drink, enough food to eat, and suffering war and the loss of family members, random and unwarranted arrest, torture, and execution, maybe they would feel, as I do, that the price of this "freedom" is far too high.

If we begin to serve something other than Allah, the world begins to fall out of balance. The reason the United States is willing to support cruel regimes and kill innocent people in order to maintain a certain way of life is because the focus has shifted from serving Allah to serving human beings instead. Accordingly, some human beings are judged as being more worthy of rights and privileges than others, and some humans are sacrificed not for the needs, but the desires of others.

When we are reminded that it is Allah we serve, we are reminded that we are all equal in our weakness before him. And whether our intention is pure or not, the statement “It is you that we serve,” is true, because whether willingly or unwillingly, everything and everyone in the universe is serving the will of the Creator.

ثُمَّ اسْتَوَى إِلَى السَّمَاءِ وَهِيَ دُخَانٌ فَقَالَ لَهَا وَلِلأَرْضِ ائْتِنَا طَوْعًا أَوْ كَرْهًا
قَالَتَا أَتَيْنَا طَائِعَيْنَ

“He established His dominance over the sky, which (for that time) was like smoke. Then He told the heavens and the earth, “Take your shape either willingly or by force” They said, “We willingly obey”.³⁵

So the statement “It is you who we serve” is a statement of fact. Whether we intend it or not, our actions glorify Allah. An example of this is the story of Moses and the Pharaoh— although the Pharaoh's actions were consistently in opposition to the message that Moses brought, it was these very actions that made the glory and the majesty of the Almighty become manifest.

Had the Pharaoh recognized Moses' divine authority and simply released the tribe of Israel, there would have been no occasion for the magicians challenging Moses, and Moses' staff transforming into a serpent and eating the illusions conjured by the magicians. There would have been no occasion for the parting of the water, and the subsequent drowning of the Pharaoh. In the same way, the difficulty and pain in our lives are what make us aware of our frailty, and are what causes us to turn to Allah for assistance.

When this assistance arrives it is a confirmation of our belief which strengthens our faith, which builds our connection to Allah, and our cognizance of his glory and power, majesty and beauty.

The beauty of the earth and the stars testify to the goodness of the condition of willing submission. And indeed, the Prophet ﷺ used the moon and stars to describe the righteous and the believers.

قال رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم “من سلك طريقاً يبتغي فيه علمًا سهل الله له طريقاً إلى الجنة وإن الملائكة لتضع أجنحتها لطلاب العلم رضا بما

35. Surah Fussilat: 11

صنع، وإن العالم ليستغفر له من في السماوات والأرض حتى الحيتان في الماء، وفضل العالم على العابد كفضل القمر على سائر الكواكب، وإن العلماء ورثة الأنبياء وإن الأنبياء لم يورثوا ديناراً ولا درهما وإنما ورثوا العلم. فمن أخذه أخذ بحظ وافر"

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, "*He who follows a path in quest of knowledge, Allah will make the path of Jannah easy to him. The angels lower their wings over the seeker of knowledge, being pleased with what he does. The inhabitants of the heavens and the earth and even the fish in the depth of the oceans seek forgiveness for him. The superiority of the learned man over the devout worshipper is like that of the full moon to the rest of the stars (i.e., in brightness). The learned are the heirs of the Prophets who bequeath neither dinar nor dirham but only that of knowledge; and he who acquires it, has in fact acquired an abundant portion.*"³⁶

Dinar and dirham were respectively gold and silver coins in circulation at that time. Jannah here refers to paradise, or the eternal abode of those who receive the mercy of Allah. It literally means garden, but in the Quran and hadith it refers to the garden of paradise. Every person is resurrected with darkness or light commensurate to their actions in this life, so the believers are likened here to the moon and the stars by their light. I only mention this here because we see the similarity between those who willingly submit to Allah and consciously glorify Him- this is a quality shared by the earth, the trees and plants, animals and insects, the stars and the sincere believers, may Allah make us among them.

At this point, we reach the middle of the Surah Fatihah, and some internal symmetry becomes apparent. The surah consists of 7 ayat, and this ayah, (*iyaka n'abudu wa iyaka nasta'in*) is the fourth, meaning it is the center of 7, with 3 on either side. And the thematic shift happens precisely in the middle of this ayah.

Up to this point in the Surah, everything has been directed towards Allah- starting with praise and thanks, continuing with description of the nature of Allah (the Creator), then time and the universe (ie. the creation), and then finally affirming our relationship to Allah. At this point the flow of meaning shifts from being directed towards Allah to being directed towards ourselves.

36. Riyad as-Salihin 1388

The ayah continues “wa iyaka nasta’in” which literally means “it is you we ask for help.” This is appropriate at this moment, because when we affirm our role as servants of Allah there is a possibility that we might think that Allah needs our service. To avoid such thoughts we immediately affirm that it is in fact we who are in need of Allah. This is made even more clear in other ayat of the Quran.

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ أَنْتُمُ الْفُقَرَاءُ إِلَى اللَّهِ وَاللَّهُ هُوَ الْغَنِيُّ الْحَمِيدُ

O mankind, you are those in need of Allah, while Allah is the Free of need, the Praiseworthy.³⁷

The idea of serving one who is free of need might seem odd at first, but if we consider that Allah is the most Kind, the most Compassionate, we understand that by fulfilling our purpose and life and willingly worshiping the Creator we are doing what is best for our own lives and our souls, in this life and beyond.

While I don’t believe that the concept of transmigration of souls represents authentic Buddhist teaching by any means, there is a somewhat analogous concept in Buddhist cosmology. Some Buddhist teachings emphasize that humanity has a very unique position, and that it is a great privilege to be human, because there exists a tremendous opportunity to reach spiritual attainments, in comparison to, for example, angelic beings.

Angels, being completely immersed in spiritual reality have no real opportunity to do wrong, so while they are pure and virtuous, their virtue is not nearly as meritorious as the virtuous behavior of a human being who has abundant opportunities to do evil and go wrong.

So while Allah does not need or worship, it is us who needs this worship, and we are the ones who most benefit from it. And this request for help is at once a supplication and a reminder of this fact. Another affirmation of the purpose of this world is to make apparent what is best in humanity.

This also contains another important aspect of the unity of Allah. It might seem that the difference between Christians and Muslims is not so great,

37. Surah Al-Fatir: 35

since after all, they worship the same God. This issue is summed up very well by the first commandment of the law of Moses:

“You shall have no other gods beside Me”³⁸

In English composition class, I was taught that the headline of an article should contain the most important information, followed by the next most important information, and so on. This same rule is present here, as the first of the ten commandments is the most important.

Supplication is a form of worship. At this point in the surah, we have established the unity of Allah in several ways- the One to whom all praise is due, the One who is more merciful and compassionate than any other, the One who presides over the final judgment, the One who we worship and serve, and now we establish that Allah is the One who we ask for help as well.

Of course, the question might come to mind, how can we care for anyone around us, or get help from anyone, if we are meant to serve and ask for help *only* from Allah? Referring back to the principle that the entire universe is in service to the Creator, we realize that whatever we do to serve others, we are unconsciously or consciously serving Allah. And of course, we know that to do so consciously is better than to do so unconsciously, so affirming this in our prayer serves a reminder to increase our consciousness of Allah in simple actions like providing for our family, doing housework, caring for children, and greeting and helping neighbors.

There is a principle in Islam that the spiritual repercussions of actions is according to the intentions behind those actions.

قَالَ سَمِعْتُ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ يَقُولُ "إِنَّمَا الْأَعْمَالُ بِالنِّيَّاتِ، وَإِنَّمَا لِكُلِّ امْرٍ مَا نَوَى..."

Umar Ibn Al-Khattab relates that he heard the Messenger of Allah ﷺ say, “*Verily, actions are by intentions, and for every person is what he intended.*”³⁹

38. Deuteronomy 5:6

39. Musnad Ahmad 168

This means, for example, that work can sustain us, and we may work for this purpose, and we will take the benefit from this work in the form of our earnings. If we work with the intention of fulfilling the command of Allah, since we recognize that Allah has commanded us to care for our families, then there is more blessing, and more spiritual rewards to our work. If we also have the intention to work so that we may be nourished and strong enough to do good work for the sake of Allah, to worship and gain beneficial knowledge and help and support others in goodness, then the spiritual benefit of the work will increase as well.

In this way, the more our consciousness of Allah and our awareness of our purpose increases, the more blessed our actions become. And this is not just in the narrow segment of reality we are able to perceive, but in the totality of reality, ie. Eternity. There are a couple of narrations that illustrate that acts of serving the community can also be acts of serving Allah.

عَنْ أَبِي هُرَيْرَةَ عَنِ النَّبِيِّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ قَالَ لَا يَشْكُرُ اللَّهَ مَنْ لَا
يَشْكُرُ النَّاسَ

Abu Huraira reported: The Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, said, “*He has not thanked Allah who has not thanked people.*”⁴⁰

This points out that a part of gratitude to the Creator is gratitude to the means by which something arrives to us from Allah— in this case, a person who does a favor for us. Another hadith is roughly parallel to a biblical narrative which mentions the relationship between interacting with humans and our relationship to the Creator:

عَنْ أَبِي هُرَيْرَةَ قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ
يَقُولُ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ يَا ابْنَ آدَمَ مَرْضَتُ فَلَمْ تَعْذِنِي قَالَ يَا رَبِّ كَيْفَ أَعُوذُكَ
وَأَنْتَ رَبُّ الْعَالَمِينَ قَالَ أَمَا عَلِمْتَ أَنَّ عَبْدِي قُلْلَانَا مَرْضَ فَلَمْ تَعْذِدْهُ أَمَا
عَلِمْتَ أَنَّكَ لَوْ عُذْتَهُ لَوْ جَدْتَنِي عِنْدَهُ يَا ابْنَ آدَمَ اسْتَطْعَمْتُكَ فَلَمْ تُطْعِمْنِي قَالَ
يَا رَبِّ وَكَيْفَ أُطْعِمُكَ وَأَنْتَ رَبُّ الْعَالَمِينَ قَالَ أَمَا عَلِمْتَ أَنَّهُ اسْتَطْعَمْكَ

40. Sunan Abi Dawud 4811

عَبْدِي فُلَانْ فَلْمُ تُطْعِمْهُ أَمَا عَلِمْتَ أَنَّكَ لَوْ أَطْعَمْتَهُ لَوْ جَدْتَ ذَلِكَ عِنْدِي يَا ابْنَ آدَمَ اسْتَسْقِيْتُكَ فَلَمْ تَسْقِيَ قَالَ يَا رَبِّ كَيْفَ أَسْقِيْكَ وَأَنْتَ رَبُّ الْعَالَمِينَ قَالَ اسْتَسْقَالَكَ عَبْدِي فُلَانْ فَلْمُ تَسْقِهِ أَمَا إِنَّكَ لَوْ سَقَيْتَهُ وَجَدْتَ ذَلِكَ عِنْدِي

"Verily, Allah will say to his slave when He will be taking account of him on the Day of Judgement, 'O' son of Adam, I was hungry and you did not feed me.' He will answer: 'How could I feed you? You are the Lord of the worlds!' He will say: 'Did you not know that my slave so and so who is the son of so and so felt hunger, and you did not feed him. Alas, had you fed him you would have found that (i.e. reward) with Me.' 'O' son of Adam, I was thirsty and you gave Me nothing to drink.' He will reply: 'How could I give You drink? You are the Lord of the worlds!' He will say: 'Did you not know that my slave so and so, the son of so and so felt thirsty and you did not give him drink. Alas, if you had given him, you would have found that (i.e. reward) with me.' 'O' son of Adam, I became sick and you did not visit Me.' He will answer: 'How can I visit You? You are the Lord of the worlds!' He will say: 'Did you not know that my slave so and so, the son of so and so became sick and you did not visit him. Alas, had you visited him, you would have found Me with him.'"⁴¹

The Biblical version is as follows:

"For I was hungry and you gave Me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave Me something to drink, I was a stranger and you took Me in, I was naked and you clothed Me, I was sick and you looked after Me, I was in prison and you visited Me."

Then the righteous will answer Him, 'Lord, when did we see You hungry and feed You, or thirsty and give You something to drink? When did we see You a stranger and take You in, or naked and clothe You? When did we see You sick or in prison and visit You?'

And the King will reply, 'Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of Mine, you did for Me.'

Then He will say to those on His left, 'Depart from Me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. For I was hungry

41. Mishkat al-Masabih 1528

and you gave Me nothing to eat, I was thirsty and you gave Me nothing to drink, I was a stranger and you did not take Me in, I was naked and you did not clothe Me, I was sick and in prison and you did not visit Me.’

And they too will reply, ‘Lord, when did we see You hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not minister to You?’

Then the King will answer, ‘Truly I tell you, whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for Me.”

The point is that our way of interacting with the created universe is very much connected to our way of relating with the Creator. When it comes to asking for help, it is of course acceptable to ask people for help, but it is preferable not to:

عَوْفُ بْنُ مَالِكٍ قَالَ كُنَّا عِنْدَ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ سَبْعَةً أَوْ ثَمَانِيَّةً أَوْ تِسْعَةً فَقَالَ أَلَا تُبَايِعُونَ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ وَكُنَّا حَدِيثٌ عَهْدٌ بِبَيْعَةٍ قُلْنَا قَدْ بَأَيْعُنَاكَ حَتَّى قَالَهَا ثَلَاثًا فَبَسَطْنَا أَيْدِينَا فَبَأَيْعُنَاهُ فَقَالَ قَائِلٌ يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ إِنَّا قَدْ بَأَيْعُنَاكَ فَعَلَامَ نُبَايِعُكَ قَالَ أَنْ تَعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ وَلَا تُشْرِكُوا بِهِ شَيْئًا وَتُصَلِّو الصَّلَوَاتِ الْخَمْسَ وَتَسْمَعُوا وَتُطِيعُوا وَأَسْرَرَ كَلِمَةً حَفِيَّةً قَالَ وَلَا تَسْأَلُوا النَّاسَ شَيْئًا قَالَ فَقَدْ كَانَ بَعْضُ أُولَئِكَ النَّفَرِ يَسْقُطُ سُوْطُهُ فَمَا يَسْأَلُ أَحَدًا أَنْ يُنَاوِلَهُ إِيَّاهُ

Awf ibn Malik reported: We were with the Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, while there were seven, or eight, or nine of us and he said, “*Will you not give your pledge of allegiance to the Messenger of Allah?*” We had recently given our pledge, so we said, “We have given you our pledge of allegiance,” but he said it again three times, so we offered our hands and pledged allegiance to him again. Someone said, “O Messenger of Allah, we have already given you our pledge, so what are we pledging to now?” The Prophet said, “*That you worship Allah and do not associate any partners with Him, that you pray for five prayers, that you listen and obey,*” and then he said something very softly, “*And that you do not ask people for anything.*” Indeed, some of those people obeyed this to the extent that if his whip were to fall from his mount, he would not ask anyone to hand it to him.⁴²

There are a couple reasons for this that come to mind. One is illustrated by

42. Sunan Abi Dawud 1642

the following principle.

عَنْ ابْنِ عُمَرَ أَنَّ النَّبِيَّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ قَالَ أَحَبُّ النَّاسِ إِلَى اللَّهِ أَنْفَعُهُمْ لِلنَّاسِ وَأَحَبُّ الْأَعْمَالِ إِلَى اللَّهِ سُرُورٌ تُدْخِلُهُ عَلَى مُسْلِمٍ أَوْ تَكْشِفُ عَنْهُ كُرْبَةً أَوْ تَقْضِي عَنْهُ دِينًا أَوْ تَطْرُدُ عَنْهُ جُوَاعًا وَلَانَّ أَمْشِيَ مَعَ أَخِيهِ فِي حَاجَةٍ أَحَبُّ إِلَيَّ مِنْ أَنْ أَعْتَكُ فِي هَذَا الْمَسْجِدِ يَعْنِي مَسْجِدَ الْمَدِينَةِ شَهْرًا وَمَنْ كَفَ غَضَبَهُ سَتَرَ اللَّهُ عَوْرَتَهُ وَمَنْ كَظَمَ غَيْظَهُ وَلَوْ شَاءَ أَنْ يُمْضِيَهُ أَمْضَاهُ مَلَأَ اللَّهُ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ قَلْبَهُ أَمْنًا يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ وَمَنْ مَشَى مَعَ أَخِيهِ فِي حَاجَةٍ حَتَّى أَثْبَتَهَا لَهُ أَثْبَتَ اللَّهُ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ قَدَمَهُ عَلَى الصِّرَاطِ يَوْمَ تَرَلُ فِيهِ الْأَقْدَامُ

Ibn Umar reported: The Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, said, “*The most beloved people to Allah are those who are most beneficial to the people. The most beloved deed to Allah is to make a Muslim happy, or to remove one of his troubles, or to forgive his debt, or to feed his hunger. That I walk with a brother regarding a need is more beloved to me than that I seclude myself in this mosque in Medina for a month. Whoever swallows his anger, then Allah will conceal his faults. Whoever suppresses his rage, even though he could fulfill his anger if he wished, then Allah will secure his heart on the Day of Resurrection. Whoever walks with his brother regarding a need until he secures it for him, then Allah the Exalted will make his footing firm across the bridge on the day when the footings are shaken.*”⁴³

Of course, someone who gives is more beneficial than someone who takes. The more we are in the habit of not burdening others with our needs, the better off society will be.

عَنْ أَبِي أَمَامَةَ قَالَ قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ يَا ابْنَ آدَمَ إِنَّكَ أَنْ تُبَدِّلَ الْفَضْلَ حَيْرٌ لَكَ وَأَنْ تُمْسِكَهُ شَرٌّ لَكَ وَلَا تُلَامُ عَلَى كَفَافٍ وَابْدُأْ بِمَنْ تَعْوُلُ وَالْيَدُ الْعُلَيَا حَيْرٌ مِنْ الْيَدِ السُّفَلَى

Abu Umamah reported: The Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, said, “*O son of Adam, it is better for you to spend in charity and to withhold is evil for you, but there is no blame if you withhold for*

43. al-Mu'jam al- Awsat 6192

necessary living. Begin with your dependents, and the upper hand that gives is better than the lower hand that takes.”⁴⁴

Another reason why it is beneficial to discourage asking for things is to cultivate a closer connection and dependence on Allah. Dependence is something like fear. It is generally negative if applied to the universe or anything in it, but becomes positive when applied to Allah. As our fear of Allah increases, our fear of Allah’s creation decreases, because we understand that Allah has dominion over all created things— even fire can only burn with His permission, and there are many instances reported in history of people who were thrown into blazing fires remaining unharmed.

Likewise, dependency is a sign of weakness if we are dependent on human beings, and this is a negative because people’s resources are limited. If we draw upon someone’s time or money, it means there is less for them, or for others who they might otherwise help. However, when we draw upon Allah, we are drawing upon a source that is infinite, and thereby becoming more fully engaged with the true purpose of our existence. If we refrain from asking a person for something, and instead ask Allah, our awareness of Allah increases while we are asking— we know Allah has the power to grant it, and then when we receive what we are asking for it is as if it is a miracle.

For example, on a hot day, very thirsty, I might be able to ask someone for something to drink. I could get something to drink, and I might be grateful for it. This could happen with me barely remembering or being aware of Allah, although it is completely by the grace of the Almighty that I receive anything to drink.

However, if I ask Allah for something to drink, and wait patiently, or continue to supplicate, trying to ask more sincerely, I am forming a connection with the Creator. Then when someone bizarrely and miraculously offers me an incredibly delicious drink, after I’ve been suffering thirst for half an hour, my faith is increased dramatically, and the gratitude I feel to the person who provides me with the drink increases, the thanks and blessings I invoke on the person who provided me with it increase, and a seemingly mundane action of fulfilling a basic need has become something miraculous and a renewal and increase for my faith.

So dependency, when it comes to Allah, is a sign of strength, because:

44. Sahih Muslim 1036

وَمَن يَتَوَكَّلْ عَلَى اللَّهِ فَهُوَ حَسْبُهُ

And if any one puts his trust in Allah, sufficient is (Allah) for him.⁴⁵

Depending on Allah and asking Allah for help is also an essential part of recognizing the unity of Allah. Why are Christians called disbelievers, when they believe in the same God as the Muslims?

For one, they reject the truthfulness of Mohammed ﷺ and they reject the communications from Allah in the form of the Quran. But another reason is because by associating partners with the Lord of Jesus and Mohammed, they disbelieve in God Himself.

When a Christian supplicates to Jesus, believing Jesus has the power to answer their supplications, they are essentially saying that they don't think that Allah is able to answer their supplications, or at least that they think that Jesus is an aspect of God that is more able than the father or holy spirit. The same goes for seeking intercession with saints. Some Muslims and Christians believe that certain holy people are closer to Allah, and as such, we can ask them to intercede for us, and thus increase the likelihood of our prayer being answered.

Again, with the intercession of saints, what this boils down to is that people either believe that Allah is either not able or not willing to listen to someone's supplication, and that the supplication will be more effective if directed to someone else. This is to deny two of Allah's essential qualities *Al Mujib* and *As Sami*, the Responsive and the All Hearing, as well as the promise of Allah as articulated in the Quran and Bible:

وَقَالَ رَبُّكُمْ ادْعُونِي أَسْتَجِبْ لَكُمْ إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يَسْتَكْبِرُونَ عَنْ عِبَادَتِي سَيَدْخُلُونَ جَهَنَّمَ دَاخِرِينَ

And your Lord says, "Call upon Me; I will respond to you." Indeed, those who disdain My worship will enter Hell [rendered] contemptible.⁴⁶

45. Surah Talaq: 3

46. Surah Ghafar: 60

“Ask, and it will be given you. Seek, and you will find. Knock, and it will be opened for you. For everyone who asks receives. He who seeks finds. To him who knocks it will be opened.”⁴⁷

To reject any aspect or speech of Allah is to reject Allah. If you say you believe in Allah, but you believe that Allah is not All Hearing, you are not really speaking about Allah, but rather some other concept that you have in your mind. This is why it is extremely important that when it comes prayers and supplications, that they be directed to Allah alone- as the biblical saying goes, a servant cannot serve two masters, and as the Quran reminds us:

مَا جَعَلَ اللَّهُ لِرَجُلٍ مِّنْ قَلْبَيْنِ فِي جَوْفِهِ

Allah has not placed two hearts in the chest of men.⁴⁸

So if we look deeply at each individual verse in Surah Fatihah, we can see that there is clear reference to tawheed, the unity of the Creator.

47. Matthew 7:7-8

48. Surah al Ahzab: 4

Ihdina Sirat al Mustaqim

(اَهْدِنَا الصِّرَاطَ الْمُسْتَقِي)

Ihdina comes from the trilateral root H D Y. It is an imperative form, which means it directly requests an action. It literally means “to guide,” and the addition of *na* on the end means it refers to us, or we, rather than a singular I or me.

This is an important theme. Many of the ills of modern Western civilization may stem from an excessively individualistic approach to religion, and life in general. The fatihah is recited frequently in the life of a Muslim both individually and collectively, but in all these cases we ask for guidance collectively.

There is great merit in this, which may be indicated in this hadith:

عَنْ عُبَادَةَ بْنِ الصَّامِتِ قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ مَنْ اسْتَغْفَرَ لِلْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَالْمُؤْمِنَاتِ كَتَبَ اللَّهُ لَهُ بِكُلِّ مُؤْمِنٍ وَمُؤْمِنَةٍ حَسَنَةٌ

‘Ubadah ibn al-Samit reported: The Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, said, “Whoever seeks forgiveness for the believing men and women, Allah will record a good deed for him by each man and woman.”⁴⁹

This hadith is weak, meaning its authenticity is in doubt. Other hadith, however, point to a similar conclusion:

عَنْ أَبِي الدَّرْدَاءِ قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ مَا مِنْ عَبْدٍ مُسْلِمٍ يَدْعُو لِأَخِيهِ بِظَاهِرِ الْعَيْبِ إِلَّا قَالَ الْمَلَكُ وَلَكَ بِمِثْلِ

Abu Darda reported: The Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, said, “No Muslim servant supplicates for his brother behind his back but that the angel says: And for you the same.”⁵⁰

49. Musnad al-Shāfiyyīn 2118

50. Sahih Muslim 2732 a

That is to say, when we pray for others, the angels pray for us. This points toward the basic preference for togetherness as opposed to isolation.

عَبْدُ اللَّهِ بْنُ عُمَرَ، قَالَ سَمِعْتُ أَبِي يَقُولُ، سَمِعْتُ عُمَرَ بْنَ الْخَطَّابِ، يَقُولُ
قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ - صَلَى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ - "كُلُوا جَمِيعًا وَلَا تَقْرَفُوا فَإِنَّ
الْبَرَكَةَ مَعَ الْجَمَاعَةِ"

"I heard my father say: 'I heard 'Umar bin Khattab say: "The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: '*Eat together and do not eat separately, for the blessing is in being together.*'"⁵¹

The superiority of asking for guidance collectively is apparent, because it requires as much speech as asking for guidance individually, and yet the individual request is contained within it. In other words, I can ask Allah to guide me, and this takes just as much effort as asking Allah to guide us, yet I am contained within us.

There is the additional possibility that more blessings can be contained in making prayers for others.

The next step is to specify exactly what we are requesting guidance to. *Sirat* means path, way, or road, and may be related to the Romantic street (English), strasse (German), strada (Italian). A road references a journey, which has a desired destination.

If there is such a destination, it follows that it is also possible to get lost, or to deviate from the correct path. The correct path, the one to which we ask guidance, is defined as *sirat al-mustaqim*. This is usually translated as "the straight path."

Mustaqim is derived from the trilateral root Q-W-M, which literally refers to the act of standing, or more generally something that is not straight becoming straight.

Ibn Abbas, رضي الله عنه, said that the straight path refers to Islam.

This is also sometimes understood to be connected to an event in the hereafter, the crossing of the *sirat*:

51. Sunan Ibn Majah Vol. 4, Book 29, Hadith 3287

It is narrated from Abu Sa‘eed al-Khudri (may Allah be pleased with him) in a lengthy hadith: “.....*Then the bridge will be laid across Hell.*’ We said, “O Messenger of Allah! What is the bridge?” He said, ‘*It is a slippery (bridge) on which there are clamps and (hooks like) thorns which are wide at one side and narrow at the other and have bent ends. A plant with such thorns is found in Najd and is called al-Sa‘daan. Some of the believers will cross the bridge as quickly as the wink of an eye, some others as quick as lightning, a strong wind, or fast horses or she-camels. So some will be safe without any harm; some will be safe after receiving some scratches, and some will fall down into Hell (Fire). The last person will cross by being dragged (over the bridge).*”⁵²

Abu Sa‘eed said: I heard that the bridge is narrower than a hair and sharper than a sword.

The way that we pass over this bridge, and either pass safely or fall into hell, is according to our deeds in our life, our faith, and the extent to which Allah has mercy upon us. The nature of such a bridge is such that if one deviates from the straightness of the path, one will fall into the hell beneath it.

This is often linked to the sentiment of moderation in Islam.

وَكَذِلِكَ جَعَلْنَاكُمْ أُمَّةً وَسَطًا لِتَكُونُوا شُهَدَاءَ عَلَى النَّاسِ وَيَكُونَ الرَّسُولُ عَلَيْكُمْ شَهِيدًا

And thus We made you a community (of the) middle way so that you will be witnesses over the mankind, and will be the Messenger on you a witness.⁵³

So if we envision ourselves passing over a narrow bridge, a deviation to the right or left will have us falling off. In many things in life, there are extremes – take food, for example. It’s very easy to overeat, with the result that the body and mind becomes sluggish, digestion is impeded, and a number of negative side effects arise which can get in the way of worship.

To counter this, many ascetics will fast continuously, or abstain completely from all fat, meat, and sweets, in order to hone their spiritual consciousness and avoid becoming attached to the worldly life. In the process, they may

52. Sahih al-Bukhari 7439

53. Surah Al-Baqara: 143

become weak and lose energy in their devotions, or may become dependent on others for their livelihood, thus becoming a load on the community and negating some of the virtue of their abstention.

The correct path is a balance between these extremes, and this is part of the meaning of Islam. It is a state of harmony with our animal desires, in which we neither try to eliminate them, nor be dominated by them.

Considering the word *mustaqim*, or straightness, is reminiscent of another passage in the Quran.

أَفَمَنْ يَمْشِي مُكَبًّا عَلَى وَجْهِهِ أَهْذَى أَمْنَ يَمْشِي سَوِيًّا عَلَى صِرَاطٍ مُّسْتَقِيمٍ

Is he who walks prone on his face, more rightly guided, or he who walks upright on a straight path?⁵⁴

The description here presents an image of a person walking with his face against the ground, meaning that this person is unable to see where he is going. As a metaphor, one who is walking upon his face is only able to see their immediate location— they are unaware of where they are going, and would wander about lost.

This is reminiscent of the spiritual reality of the unbeliever. They focus only on their immediate situation, without looking at their destination, which is the eternity after this brief life. As such, they are wandering about, lost, without a sense of their true purpose. Hence, the *sirata al mustaqim* is the path of looking forward, upright, and focusing on the destination of the eternal abode.

And indeed, this is the path of the Muslim, the one who is in submission to the divine decree, because submission to a command is only possible if one has awareness of the command, and awareness of the command is only possible if one has awareness of the One giving the command.

54. Surah Mulk: 22

Sirata ladhina an'amta alayhim

(صِرَاطُ الَّذِينَ أَنْعَمْتَ عَلَيْهِمْ)

Sirata is a repetition of the word from the previous ayah, and *ladhina* refers to a group of people, “those.” *An’amta* is derived from *n’ama*, which could be translated as grace, blessing, or favor. So a rough translation of this is “the path of those upon whom you have bestowed your grace” or “your favor.”

This is an elaboration of the previous verse, specifying and qualifying the supplication that is being made. It’s a description of the *sirata al mustaqim*, clarifying that those who traveled this path in life were those upon whom Allah has bestowed his grace and favor. Beyond just being a reminder of what this path is, it is also an affirmation that it is by the grace of Allah that any human is able to follow this path.

This, of course, refers to the Muslims, or those individuals who reached a state of Islam during their lives. Muslims are not only the followers of Muhammed, but all of those who lived in willing submission to the divine decree. What comes to my mind when I recite this is the numerous stories of miracles and saints that I have heard from around the world. It also brings to mind the verse

يَا بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ اذْكُرُوْا نِعْمَتِي الَّتِي أَنْعَمْتُ عَلَيْكُمْ وَأَنِّي فَضَّلَّتُكُمْ عَلَى الْعَالَمِينَ

“O children of Israel, call to mind My favor which I bestowed on you and that I made you excel the nations.”⁵⁵

The same word, *an’amta* is used here to describe the blessings given by Allah to the tribe of Israel.

This status is sometimes referred to in the English speaking world as the “chosen people.” In the United States, many African Americans relate strongly to this story, as it is the story of an escape from slavery by means of divine blessings.

It makes sense that former slaves of African descent would appreciate the

55. Surah Al-Baqarah: 112

idea of being miraculously freed from a tyrannical and oppressive rule by divine grace. In American hippie culture, the oppressive system is sometimes likened to “Babylon,” and the narrative of Moses and the tribe of Israel is viewed as an allegory as much as a literal recounting of events.

The Children of Israel were freed from the Pharoah by a series of events of divine origin, after which they spent 40 years wandering in the wilderness, eating a very simple and pure but blessed diet. Likewise, families that try to drop out of the system in America end up living in the wilderness in relative poverty on a simple and pure diet.

The same goes with striving to live according to Islamic law- if you really want to live somewhere where Islamic law is implemented, it means living in very simple conditions with very limited access to different foods and services, possibly somewhere like the mountains of Western Pakistan or Yemen, or one of the other areas that are the focus of the “war on terror.”

This recalls a hadith.

عَنْ أَبِي سَعِيدِ الْخُدْرِيِّ، أَنَّهُ قَالَ قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ " يُوْشِكُ أَنْ يَكُونَ خَيْرُ مَالِ الْمُسْلِمِ عَنْمٌ يَتَّبَعُ بِهَا شَعْفَ الْجِبَالِ وَمَوَاقِعَ الْقَطْرِ، يَفْرُّ بِدِينِهِ مِنَ الْفِتْنَ "

Abu Sa'eed al-Khudri (may Allaah be pleased with him) said: The Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) said: *“Soon there will come a time when the best wealth a Muslim will have will be sheep which he will take to the mountaintops and places where rain falls, fleeing for the sake of his religious commitment from tribulation.”*⁵⁶

This reference to sheep seems to refer to subsistence agriculture. This could be because many other forms of livelihood depend on being connected to the larger political and economic structure of a society- the system which some refer to as “Babylon.”

By means of subsistence agriculture a person is able to avoid participating in the satanic economic system which dominates the world.

Of course, the blessing of the tribe of Israel doesn't just refer to the forty

56.Sahih al-Bukhari 19

years of purification, an entire generation, in the wilderness, before inheriting the promised land. It also might refer to the many Prophets that were raised from the tribe of Israel victory while severely outnumbered, like King David, for example. It could also refer to the saints and the miracles they worked, the truthful and the martyrs. Another verse elaborates on the same concept.

وَمَن يُطِعِ اللَّهَ وَالرَّسُولَ فَأُولَئِكَ مَعَ الَّذِينَ أَنْعَمَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِمْ مِنَ النَّبِيِّينَ
وَالصِّدِّيقِينَ وَالشُّهَدَاءِ وَالصَّالِحِينَ وَحَسْنَ أُولَئِكَ رَفِيقًا

And whoever obeys Allah and the Messenger - those will be with the ones upon whom Allah has bestowed favor of the prophets, the steadfast affirmers of truth, the martyrs and the righteous. And excellent are those as companions.⁵⁷

This verse also uses the word *an'ama*, thus further elaborating on the characteristics of those who are upon the *sirata al mustaqim*. So the broad supplication that we repeat when reciting *fatihah* encompasses all of these categories.

This wording does not single out any religious or political community as the sole ones who are rightly guided. Rather, it shows that there were such blessed ones in every community on earth, since these characteristics are not specific to any race or community. This does not mean that everyone should simply follow their desires when it comes to religion; the age that we live in is characterized by the presence of the revelation of the Quran, and while truthfulness and righteousness is not the exclusive domain of those who believe in the revelation of the Quran, if the message reaches a righteous and truthful person, they will not reject it. On the flipside, there are always wolves in sheep's clothing who accept the revelation with ulterior motives.

Blessing or grace can also refer to worldly things, but really it is made clear by the simplicity of the life of the tribe of Israel in the wilderness that it is referring to a spiritual more than material blessing- all material blessings like wealth, beauty, children, family, love, money, and knowledge are not in and of themselves evidence of the favor of the Creator- all of these things can be either a source of benefit or of harm to us, depending on how we use them. But the characteristics described in the ayah above- truthfulness, righteousness, self sacrifice, and Prophecy- these are all things that are purely

57. Surah An-Nisa: 69

beneficial; truth and honesty is in and of itself good, and truthfulness is independent of intelligence, wealth, or health, or any other temporary provision of this life.

So by reflecting upon who the people who have truly received the blessing of the Almighty are, we find the answer to our supplication contained within the request. If we simply think about these blessed people and peoples, then we will find ourselves admiring and emulating them in our thoughts and actions, and consequently we will become more like them— blessed.

By considering the qualities of those who have received this blessing, our own values will shift. After all, we know that the Prophets, saints, and righteous are the best of humanity, and we know why they were the best of humanity— because of inner, spiritual qualities, rather than anything external.

As we become more aware of the value of sincerity and self-sacrifice for the sake of others, our valuation of more superficial qualities like intelligence, education, money, or beauty, will decrease. and we will gravitate naturally towards people who share similar values, and we will be repelled from superficial and materialistic people.

As we become closer to people who embody the qualities of true blessings, this influence will rub off on us. Thus, refinement of character and the soul proceeds simply from reciting and pondering on these verses with sincerity.

So this is one practical way of seeing the truth of God's statement:

وَإِذْ تَأَذَّنَ رَبُّكُمْ لَئِنْ شَكَرْتُمْ لَا زَيْدَنَكُمْ وَلَئِنْ كَفَرْتُمْ إِنَّ عَذَابِي لَشَدِيدٌ

And [remember the time] when your Sustainer made [this promise] known:
'If you are grateful [to Me], I shall most certainly give you more and more
but if you are ungrateful indeed, My punishment (is) surely severe.. ⁵⁸

That is, that when we appreciate something, we value it. When we value something, we modify our behavior in such a way that we become open to receive more of whatever it is we appreciate. This is a literal way of seeing the truth of this statement, however, there are likely other levels of meaning of which I am not aware

58. Surah Ibrahim: 7

Ghairil maghdubi alayhim wa la daalin

(غَيْرُ الْمَغْضُوبِ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا الضَّالِّينَ)

The last *ayah* consists of two parts, although some scholars differed on whether this is one *ayah* or two. In any case, both parts are clarification and definition of the *sirata al mustaqim*. The first part is positive, or affirmative, while the second part defines the qualities of those who are *not* upon the right path.

The continuation of the ayah follows “*ghairil maghdubi alayhim wa la daalin*.” *Ghairil* is a negative, meaning literally other than, or outside of. *Maghdubi* means anger or wrath, and *alayhim* means upon them. So *ghairil maghdubi alayhim* literally means, “not who your anger/wrath is on them.” *Wa la daalin* means literally “and not who are in error.” I have also seen *daalin* translated as “those who have gone astray.”

One interesting thing to note about this structure is the contrast between singular and plural. When we ask to be guided upon the path of those who have received the favor from Allah, we use the singular *sirat*. When we ask for protection from following the paths of those who have gone wrong, there are two groups mentioned, and this is a consistent theme throughout the Quran- just as our Lord is One, the right path is characterized by its unity, while the paths of misguidance are many in number.

This doesn’t mean that those who are upon the right path will physically be a single group (although that is the case at the time of Resurrection), but in an inner sense. It shows that the heart of a person who worships the Creator with sincere and exclusive devotion will be united with the hearts of others who do the same- and this is the reality of Islam.

As well as seeing the unity of the blessed and the division of the cursed, we see the assertion of the truth that there is such a thing as right and wrong.

This goes against an assumption that has become widespread among many today; that there is no such thing as divine wrath. The origin of this belief is understandable— the mercy of Allah is indeed immense. In this verse, we have a reminder that, although the mercy of Allah is vast, we should not take it for granted. If divine mercy were automatic and unconditional, there would be no justice, and no reason to strive to learn the difference between

right and wrong and to live according to it.

For many people, behaving in a righteous manner is not done out of religious conviction, but as a matter of tradition.

I remember buying sausage from a shop owned by an Iraqi family in Germany. The son, a young man, gave me a big homemade smoked sausage for free, and I was surprised, so I asked him why he gave it to me. He said “because good people do that.”

This is the type of thing I have seen consistently from Muslims all over the world, and now having read about Islam myself, I understand that the religion guides people to do good deeds like giving gifts, speaking kind words, and helping others as a means to prepare for the life after death. We cannot take with us any wealth, family, friendships, or influence that we amass in this life, but we can take with us the good that we do for others, whether it be teaching beneficial knowledge, giving charity, protecting the weak and oppressed, or controlling our anger and being forgiving and patient with others.

The man who gave me the sausage didn’t really seem to understand the religious significance of this. The wisdom in sending Prophets with miracles to impart faith to the people is apparent here. Prophets performed many miraculous actions by the permission of Allah while relaying the message of the unity of Allah and the difference between right and wrong.

Witnessing miracles imparts faith in the veracity of the message, and this faith is passed from generation to generation. Therein lies the exalted status of the Qur'an; it is a linguistic miracle, which continually imbues its readers with faith, whereas miraculous events like walking on water, healing the sick, or reviving the dead are forgotten and fade with time.

Even so, as our distance from the miracles of the Prophets increases, the level of faith decreases.

عَنِ النَّبِيِّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ قَالَ " خَيْرُ النَّاسِ قَرْنَيٌ، ثُمَّ الَّذِينَ يَلْوَنُهُمْ، ثُمَّ يَحِيُءُ مِنْ بَعْدِهِمْ قَوْمٌ تَسْبِقُ شَهَادَتَهُمْ أَيْمَانَهُمْ وَأَيْمَانَهُمْ شَهَادَتَهُمْ " وَأَيْمَانَهُمْ

The Prophet ﷺ said, "The best people are those of my generation, and then those who will come after them (the next generation), and then those who will come after them (i.e. the next generation), and then after them, there will come people whose witness will precede their oaths, and whose oaths will precede their witness."⁵⁹

So we see an overall decline in moral integrity progressing as time goes on. The Qur'an is an oasis in this desert, and being reminded of the wrath of Allah and the possibility of going astray is important, because calling the people to righteousness requires awareness on the fact that there are consequences for our actions.

This also balances out the preceding reminder of the nature of divine grace, and the people who have received it. The scholars of *tafsir* have said that this verse refers to the Jews, who willingly defied, ignored, or replaced divine commands for the sake of following personal desires. Some ayah mention this, how some Rabbis were entrusted with guarding the scripture, and failed in this duty for the sake of worldly gain.

فَوَيْلٌ لِّلَّذِينَ يَكْتُبُونَ الْكِتَابَ بِأَيْدِيهِمْ ثُمَّ يَقُولُونَ هَذَا مِنْ عِنْدِ اللَّهِ لَيَشْتَرُوا بِهِ ثَمَنًا قَلِيلًا فَوَيْلٌ لَّهُمْ مِّمَّا كَتَبْتُ أَيْدِيهِمْ وَوَيْلٌ لَّهُمْ مِّمَّا يَكْسِبُونَ

"Then woe to those who write the Book with their own hands and then say, "This is from Allah," to purchase with it a little price! Woe to them for what their hands have written and woe to them for that they earn thereby"⁶⁰

اتَّخَذُوا أَحْبَارَهُمْ وَرُهْبَانَهُمْ أَرْبَابًا مِّنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ وَالْمَسِيحَ ابْنَ مَرْيَمَ وَمَا أَمْرُوا إِلَّا لِيَعْبُدُوا إِلَهًا وَاحِدًا لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ سُبْحَانَهُ عَمَّا يُشْرِكُونَ

"They take their doctors of law and their monks for Lords besides Allah, and (also) the Messiah, son of Mary. And they were enjoined that they should serve one God only – there is no god but He. Be He glorified from what they set up (with Him)!"⁶¹

59. Sahih al-Bukhari 6429

60. Surah Al-Baqarah: 79

61. Surah At-Tawbah: 91

This is referring to Jews, for example, the Talmudic law, in which analogical reasoning was made to supersede revelation- in other words, elevating human beings to the same level as the Creator.

This is understood as direct defiance or rejection of the Creator and the communications from the Creator in the form of injunctions. The command of Allah is not a power trip— these commands come from the Most Wise and the Most Merciful. Rather, they are supreme expressions of kindness and generosity designed to guide us towards what is best for us.

The trouble is that once people have faith in these injunctions and those who are entrusted with the scripture, there is tremendous temptation to alter the divine law for personal profit.

The Messenger of Allah recited this Ayah;

اَتَخَذُوا اَحْبَرَهُمْ وَرُهْبَانَهُمْ اَرْبَابًا مِّنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ

“They took their rabbis and their monks to be their lords besides Allah”.

‘Adi commented, ‘I said, “They did not worship them.”’ The Prophet said,

بَلِ ائْتُهُمْ حَرَّمُوا عَلَيْهِمُ الْحَلَالَ وَأَحَلُوا لَهُمُ الْحَرَامَ فَاتَّبَعُو هُمْ فَذَلِكَ عِبَادَتُهُمْ
»إِيَّاهُمْ«

Yes they did. They (rabbis and monks) prohibited the allowed for them (Christians and Jews) and allowed the prohibited, and they obeyed them. This is how they worshipped them.⁶²

This indicates that obedience is a form of service or worship.

So those who have earned the wrath of Allah are those who deliberately go against the commands of Allah with evil intentions.

The second request is “*wa la daalin*,” meaning “not of those who have gone astray.” This implies that it is also possible to go wrong without having direct intention or rejection of Allah or the communications of Allah. The

62 Tafsir ibn Kathir, 61:91

*mufasirin*⁶³ said that this refers to the Christians, although it is describing a more general phenomena which may not be exclusive to Christianity.

The people who intentionally removed or added things to the revelations of the new and old testaments would probably fall into the first category, because this is open rejection of the Creator, which is probably one of the most harmful things a person can do to themselves. The second group is those who have good intentions, but go wrong nonetheless. For example, Christians believe that the law of the Old testament is no longer valid because of the Crucifixion, so when they eat pork, they don't actually believe that they are defying the creator.

This is a much bigger issue than dietary law, however. Once a few aspects of a system of moral law are compromised, the door opens to be lax with regards to other more serious issues.

Consider again the metaphor of an ocean voyage. As time goes on, the boat drifts further and further from the right course. With successive generations misguidance or neglecting of moral principles that at first seem minor may amplify as distance from the right path increases.

This certainly applies equally to Muslims or anyone else.

Like the Jewish law, Islam has clear injunctions relating to all aspects of life, including business, inheritance, marriage and divorce, circumcision, and dietary laws. And like the tests and trials that faced the Jewish people, there is the potential for great worldly gain if Muslims are willing to disregard aspects of this clear code of conduct.

There is always the temptation to focus on the mercy of Allah, and the inner, esoteric aspects of religion, which are a key element of religion. This is the trap that most Christians have fallen into, to the point that little emphasis is placed on outer adherence to the law. In modern America, I have personally witnessed among my own family and many others a certainty that spiritual salvation of “heaven” is a given, when in reality we don’t know the condition of the deceased.

If we think everyone is going to heaven, there is very little motivation to

⁶³ *Mufasir* refers to one qualified to do to *tafsir*, interpretation or exegesis of the Holy Quran.

strive towards a high moral stature. This is not be a willful disrespect for divine commandments, but it's driven either by ignorance or a false understanding of the nature of the Creator. As time goes on, this lack of moral standards becomes the norm as small bits of the truth are substituted by other practices and beliefs.

وَإِذَا قِيلَ لَهُمْ اتَّقُوا مَا أَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ فَلَوْا بِلِّ نَتِيْجَةِ مَا أَفْتَنَاهُ عَلَيْهِ آبَاءُنَا أَوْلَأُ كَانَ
آبَاؤُهُمْ لَا يَعْقِلُونَ شَيْئًا وَلَا يَهْتَدُونَ

"When they are told, "Follow what GOD has revealed herein," they say, "We follow only what we found our parents doing." What if their parents did not understand, and were not guided?"⁶⁴

There's another ayah that illustrates this gradual misguidance. It describes how the people of Noah slipped gradually into idolatry:

وَقَالُوا لَا تَدْرُنَ الْهَتَكْمُ وَلَا تَدْرُنَ وَدًا وَلَا سُوَاًعًا وَلَا يَغُوثَ وَيَعْوَقَ وَنَسْرًا

"And they have said: 'You shall not leave your gods, nor shall you leave Wadd, nor Suwa', nor Yaghuth, nor Ya'uq, nor Nasr (names of the idols)"⁶⁵

Ibn Abi Hatim, an Islamic scholar, related this story about the idol Wadd, "Waddan was a righteous man who was loved by his people. When he died, they withdrew to his grave in the land of Babylonia and were overwhelmed by sadness. When Iblis saw their sorrow caused by his death, he disguised himself in the form of a man saying: 'I have seen your sorrow because of this man's death; can I make a statue like him which could be put in your meeting place to make you remember him?' They said: 'Yes.'

So he made the statue like him. They put it in their meeting place in order to be reminded of him. When Iblis saw their interest in remembering him, he said: 'Can I build a statue of him in the home of each one of you so that he would be in everyone's house and you could remember him?'

They agreed. Their children learned about and saw what they were doing. They also learned about their remembrance of him instead of Allah. So the

64. Surah Al-Baqarah: 170

65. Surah Nuh: 23

first to be worshiped instead of Allah was Waddan, the idol which they named thus.⁶⁶

Iblis is one of the names used for Satan in the Quran. Various forms of devils and invisible beings can appear in the forms of humans. So this last verse also acts as a warning against two of the primary ways in which it is possible to diverge from the right path.

66 Qasas Al-Anbia, ibn Kathir

Comparison of the Structure of Surah Fatihah to the Lord's Prayer

If we look at Surah Fatihah as a whole, a structure is apparent

- 1a: Praise and thanks, affirmation of Lordship (Hamd and Rabb)
- 2b: Description of Allah, mercy and compassion
- 3c: Description of time and the universe
- 4d: Statement of our relationship to Allah
- 5d: Asking for help and assistance from Allah
- 6c: Asking for help in navigating time and the universe
- 7b: Describing those who have received the mercy and compassion of Allah and asking to be of them
- 8a: Describing those who have gone astray or earned the wrath of Allah, and asking not to be of them.

We can also notice that al Fatihah begins with affirmation and ends with negation, which reflects the reality of existence, which begins with birth or creation, and ends with the mention of destruction.

In the Surah Fatihah we are first made aware of the divine blessings, and then directed to be an active participant in receiving them by consciously addressing Allah and asking for His blessings.

So Surah Fatihah becomes a microcosm for our own lives- we are born, and given sight, hearing, understanding, nourishment, families, and so many blessings, and as we progress in life we become aware that we cannot simply take these blessings for granted, we experience loss and gain, and realize these changes are beyond our control, and then we enter into the realm of true wealth, which is an awareness of the Creator, gratitude, patience, and faith. These qualities come with cultivating a conscious relationship with the Creator, obeying Him and supplicating to Him, and Him alone.

Looking briefly at the structure of the Lord's prayer, there are some similarities:

1. Our Father who is in heaven
2. Hallowed be your name

3. Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as in heaven
4. give us this day our daily bread,
5. and forgive us our transgressions,
6. as we forgive those who transgress against us,
7. and lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil

1: Affirmation of qualities of Allah

2: Praise of Allah

3: Affirmation of Lordship

4: Shift to supplication (also with a transition, with the subject initially focused towards Allah and then shifting to the creation)

5: Asking Allah for His assistance

6: Requesting to be among those who receive mercy

7: Mentioning those who are faced with spiritual destruction and requesting that we not be of them.

Like Surah Fatihah, the Lord's prayer ends with two means of going astray, the first being temptation by something desirable, and the second being clear evil. It is not an exact reflection, but I see many parallels in the most commonly uttered prayers in Christianity and Islam.

Psychology and the “Dark Ages”

An individual requires family for their mental health, and in the absence of family there must be some kind of replacement for it.

A religion is essentially a system for maintaining the mental health of society. A religion is meant to guide thoughts in a healthy direction through ritual and communal contemplation. It also serves to regulate the stability and integrity of families.

When religion is abandoned as the regulating force of society, a barrier preventing the disintegration of families is removed. As families erode, so does mental health. This is apparent in the escalating crisis of addiction, or the increased severity and frequency of mass shootings.

Modern psychology and psychotherapy were born out of a rejection of religion and a profoundly mechanistic Darwinian view of the purpose of human existence. Even by the standards of modern evolutionary theory, the assumptions on which psychoanalysis was founded are simplistic and dated.

A system for regulating the health of society must be established, like any structure, on a sound foundation. Psychology was born in a period of frustration with the failure of Christianity as an organizing principle in Europe, and the context of a drive to establish a new system based on the separation of religion and government.

This period was also characterized by a major revival and idealization of classical antiquity, in particular ancient Greek culture. Hence the prominent position held by concepts like the "Oedipus complex," or "narcissism." "Autism," "schizophrenia," "dysphoria," "panic," or "paraphilia." In many ways, modern psychology draws heavily on Greek mythology and the Greek intellectual tradition.

But why was there a resurgence of Greek thought? If it is so great, why didn't these ideas remain steady throughout the past two thousand years?

There is a common tendency in discussions of history to overlook the reason that Europe turned away from the Greek intellectual tradition in the first place. Greek ideals were at the root of the system that led the population of Europe into a period of intensive and very destructive resource consumption that brought about what is now known as "the Dark

ages," a time filled with poverty, famine, and plague resulting from the collapse of a centralized, urban civilization.

There is a constant in human history. Every time a society undertakes actions that lead to its own destruction, it repents and corrects the wrongs, but inevitably forgets and repeats the same mistakes. This narrative is repeated many times the Old Testament of the Bible. The tribe of Israel worshiped the true God alone and prospered, then turned to idolatry and were ruined, then repented and returned to monotheism and entered into prosperity again, and then started worshiping idols again.

And this pattern repeats again in our own society. What is passed off as a secular form of government is in reality simply a resurgence of Greek and Roman pagan ideology mixed with Christian ideals repackaged as secular values. And of course, the implementation of this system has resulted in a way of life that is based on intensive resource consumption and threatens to bring about a new Dark age.

To understand the root of the excessive levels of consumption modern psychology is a good place to start. In many ways, psychology has come to fill many of the functions once reserved for religion, especially in terms of regulating the social and mental health of society. In psychology, a strong emphasis is placed on treating the individual, and mental illness is understood as a problem with an individual, rather than a reflection of the society around them. Individualism is integral to this world view, and as such, greater focus is placed on individual needs.

Since individualism, (or to use the Greek, egoism), causes a stronger focus on the self, it also leads to more personal consumption. As more thought is devoted to the self, less thought is devoted to others, and as a result people begin to take more and give less. It's a simple function of how much of the brain is dedicated to thinking about what— in the end, the brain has limited real estate.

The mind is like a garden, and thoughts are like water- if you think about something, it will grow. If you have a garden and water the tomatoes but don't water lettuce, soon you'll have lots of tomatoes and not a lot of lettuce.

The same goes for thinking about the self- do a lot of thinking about yourself, soon you will have a big portion of your brain dedicated to yourself, and a smaller portion that thinks about others.

Selfishness is a luxury, because it requires far more resources than communalism. This is why Christianity thrived in the “dark ages,” while Greco-Roman paganism languished.

I noticed traveling that the poorest countries are also those with the lowest level of individualism and the most emphasis on family and tribe, while the richest countries tend to be the most individualistic. When resources are limited, people have to stick together and work together to survive.

Greco-Roman religion only started to become popular again when a surplus of resources became available as a result of colonialism.

Psychology can certainly do great things for individuals, but quality psychotherapy is not cheap. So America is ending up as a sick society where you need wealth to have health. This further fuels the drive to acquire more wealth, and psychology is just one example— to have money to afford organic food, to be able to spend time relaxing in nature, or to pay a personal trainer or yoga instructor are others.

And this quest for more wealth to obtain health is a black hole, because an individual cannot truly be healthy if the society around them is sick. And in order to obtain the wealth necessary to become healthy, we oppress others and make them sick.

This forms a vicious cycle, because as much as we try to cordon off and insulate ourselves from those around us with privacy fences, border walls, or noise canceling headphones, we are still all connected. So as we directly or indirectly cause others to suffer in attempting to escape our own suffering, we are actually just deepening our own suffering and the drive to escape it.

Genealogy, Identity, the Mamluk Dynasty, and the Birth of the Modern Nation-State

A study was published that found children with a stronger sense of cultural and intergenerational identity tend to do better in school and have better mental health. You can really feel this sense of cultural identity in other countries, and by contrast you can really feel that this is missing in the individualist free for all of the US.

Having a strong cultural identity is not automatically a good thing— it can also lead to excessive pride or arrogance. It has essential functions, however, so its absence seems to be very problematic. In Islam, many of the functions that have become the domain of the state are provided by extended families or tribes, as has been the case in most of the world for most of history.

When I learned about insurance not being allowed in Islam, I asked a friend from Somalia what they do if they have a car accident. He told me that they reach out to their relatives and collect money to pay for the damages.

This impressed me. When I thought about it, it seemed that in a way, giving presents to relatives, helping them with chores, visiting and checking in— all of these things become like small payments on an insurance policy. But there are many other benefits to family as opposed to insurance, including the spiritual rewards of joining the ties of kinship and helping your relatives, and the psychological benefits of understanding yourself better by knowing your relatives, and having a sense of place and purpose.

Genealogy is important for maintaining these ties after a few generations because it is easy to forget who your relatives are. If the identity is neglected enough, the tribal identity can disintegrate.

The process of constructing nation-states in Europe was really the process of the gradual eradication of tribal consciousness. The centralized bureaucratic state and the tribe are not mutually compatible as institutions, because they both feed on the same actions of support from their participants. If the functions of the state such as providing security, medical care, education, and sanitation are filled by the tribe, why would anyone give their resources to the state?

When I first went to Egypt, the dominance of European culture was very clear, and I wanted to understand how it came to be this way. The turning point where European culture became ascendant seemed to be the French invasion by Napoleon. But this led me to ask why Napoleon invaded Egypt. I found that part of the answer was because he was at war with England, and England was getting a large portion of its resources from India. Control over Egypt was a step toward threatening England's stranglehold on India and cutting off the source of its wealth.

Napoleon only controlled Egypt for a short time, but during this time a huge amount of energy was put into transforming the Egyptian culture. This was achieved in a variety of ways, including setting up museums, research institutes, zoos, botanical gardens, schools and cultural centers. I notice that all of these institutions had similar functions— they all generate a European way of thinking, and reinforce the European way of viewing the world.

This is a brilliant method of waging war, because if you can get people to think like you, they will naturally sympathize with you. And if they sympathize with you, they won't want to fight you.

But why were the Egyptians weak enough to tolerate this campaign of cultural colonialism? This is a question that I have not yet fully understood. It appears that the society was stagnating under a Mamluk dynasty that had been in place with few changes for over 800 years. This social order worked very well in the medieval period, but was unable to compete with industrialized Europe.

The Mamluks were originally a slave caste that was mainly made up of slaves brought from the north. These slaves of Circassian origin had first been employed as servants in the military, but as they came to play a more and more important role in the military and most of them embraced Islam, eventually they came to take on the role of officers, and finally, kings.

The role of king was actually open only to slaves. This is strange, especially when you consider that the Mamluks were generally of a different ethnicity than the bulk of the population. The strength of nation-states is derived from belief in ideals and the identification of the subjects with the nation. The strength of tribes is derived from shared lineage. Tribal areas like Somalia or Afghanistan have in many cases proved more successful in resisting colonial projects than empires. The Mamluk dynasty appears not to have had either of these advantages.

They were able to repel the French after a few years, but to a large extent the damage had already been done. French aesthetics and cultural institutions continue to influence Egyptian culture until today. For example, the luxurious, baroque style furniture popularized by the court of Louis the 16th still enjoys wide popularity in Egypt.

An Ottoman officer named Mohammed Ali massacred the remaining Mamluk elite a few years after Napoleon's forces were expelled from Egypt, and began rebuilding Egypt in the image of industrial Europe, amassing a large fortune for himself in the process, and establishing a dynasty that would rule over Egypt (often with the help and permission of the British) until the formation of the Egyptian republic in the 1950's.

The end of Mohammed Ali's dynasty marked the definitive shift to the European model of the nation-state, this time in the form of pan-Arabism, and ideology which hybridizes elements of the European state with an abstract notion of tribal ethnicity.

This experiment saw a few successes, but by and large has been characterized by some of the most brutal and incompetent regimes of modern history. Today, Arabism as a political philosophy is characterized by abject failure everywhere where it persists, from Iraq, to Syria, to Egypt and Libya.

The rise of Islam as a political alternative is driven by this failure. But this too has been unsuccessful, as events like the brief reign of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt illustrate. This does not mean that Islam is incapable of providing a viable political alternative. However, if a person tries to implement Islam in every aspect of their life, the political order will not look like that of a modern, liberal state. This is because of the centrality of family to the Islamic way of life.

The example of Afghanistan cannot be overlooked here. In Afghanistan, in spite of the tremendous economic and technological superiority of their adversaries, the Afghan people have resisted and defeated the two greatest powers of the 20th century— the Soviet Union and the United States of America.

There is no doubt that Islam is very much linked to this victory, but the strong tribal ties that are fostered by Islam are also a major factor. The

human cost of these victories for the Afghan people is tremendously high, and both religious and tribal identity are necessary to absorb these losses. Both tribal and religious identity increase the willingness of an individual to sacrifice themselves for the greater good, because their identity is less rooted in their own individual identity.

Etymology and Exploration

Looking deep into language can teach us a lot about ourselves and our history. Consider, for example, the word "noon," as in "high noon."

In Roman times the hours of the day started at sunrise. So one o'clock was the first hour after dawn, two o'clock the second hour, and so on. The ninth hour, or *nona*, would have corresponded to about 3 o'clock on the modern clock.

In some monasteries in medieval England, it was customary to fast until the ninth hour, or mid afternoon. As the monks stopped using the Roman clock, the habit of calling the hour of breaking the fast "noon" stuck.

However, with time the monks apparently wanted to break their fasts earlier, so they kept making the fast gradually earlier, until eventually "noon" became what it is today— 12 o'clock, several hours earlier than the original noon.

This is a fine example of linguistic archaeology. By searching for the origins of words, we can sift through the sediment layers of history, and reconstruct informed models of how events unfolded. This particular example illustrates something that can be seen in many other areas; the gradual entropy of religiosity with time.

This study can be beneficial in terms of faith, because if one considers that faith stems partly from miraculous events, this is one method of getting closer to these events. Just as we develop strong connections to places, most notably our homelands, though spending time there, experiencing emotions, and having those emotions connected with certain people and places, we can also develop connections to remote temporal locations.

Learning additional languages is an excellent tool for expanding the capacity to model the past in this manner. It also sheds light on the deep wisdom of different cultures. For example, the root for friend, in German, is the same as the root for happiness, "freund" means "friend" and "freude" being happiness. Apparent here is the idea that the experience of shared happiness is the essence of friendship.

Many of us who are gripped by the modern, materialistic worldview have become gripped by an obsession to explore and expand into outer space.

Yet, at the same time, there is so much to explore in the inner space of our social reality, and yet this reality is often neglected due to the difficulty that we have in perceiving, quantifying, defining, and understanding the dynamics of this dimension.

Family Integrity and Happiness

Growing up in America, for the most part I only saw my family on Thanksgiving and Christmas, and something always seemed wrong about this. Although we had a good time on these holidays, it was also overshadowed with a lot of stress, somehow.

The contrast was very strong when I first visited Afghanistan. I remember walking through a town with a young man I met, and watching him greet with hugs a half dozen of his uncles and cousins. After we finished the errand we were on, we walked back down the same street, and I was amazed to see him hug all of the same relatives again.

This seemed like a very beautiful thing, and I wondered how it was that my own country was engaged in a war with this country with the clearly stated aim to make them more like us. Was this a war on compassion and kindness?

I traveled through many “poor” countries and saw many very happy, while it seemed that in America, many of my friends and I were periodically struggling with depression. On deeply considering the issue, I came to the conclusion that stable family relationships are essential to our ability to form relationships in general, and that healthy social connections are essential to happiness.

Having watched my own children suffer through two breakups, I can understand the wisdom of previous generations, why divorce was taboo until recently. I also understand why I encountered so much kindness, compassion, and happiness traveling in Muslim countries. When we lose someone who we have a strong connection with, or our relationship with them is disrupted, it leaves a scar, and increases our apprehension at forming new bonds. If we cannot form social bonds with others, it inhibits our ability to feel compassion and empathy, which reduces our ability to perform acts of kindness.

I remarried in Egypt, and when I met my wife’s family at the wedding banquet, one of the questions I was able to ask in my limited Arabic is where they live. I soon realized that all of them live in the same neighborhood, all within about 20 minutes walking distance of each other. And I have the unmistakable impression that, in spite of all the dire problems facing them,

that they are, on average, much happier than people in other places I have lived, like Germany or the United States. And I strongly suspect this has to do with the integrity of families.

You just don't see, for example, severely socially isolated elderly people all over the place like in Western Europe or the US. I don't know if this situation is related to the fact that people are much more frequent in mentioning, remembering, thanking and praising God, but I strongly suspect there is a link.

Having Children and Polygyny

The entire process of having children from conception, to birth and growing up is a beautiful thing. Having kids can teach us a lot about who we are and what it means to be human. It's also a good workout program, since keeping kids entertained and healthy requires a varied and exhausting physical regime. Thankfully, raising children gets easier as you have more kids since they tend to be naturally helpful, compassionate, and caring, and the older ones are usually willing and able to help with the younger ones.

Consider the superiority of raising children and maintaining a tight bond with them as a retirement plan, as opposed to a government or corporate backed pension fund. Pension funds often derive their profits from projects that often have horrific social and environmental consequences, including strip mines and the arms industry. At the same time, children are abandoned to schools or daycare where they are educated by strangers.

In the child-centric retirement plan, you just need to be nice to the kids, and set the example of taking care of your own parents, and they will follow suit. There might be a bad apple occasionally that could try to put you in a nursing home in your old age, but you can mitigate this risk by having more children.

Growth is the characteristic of a healthy organism, and population growth is the means by which a society grows. Fertility rates are very low in Europe and the US which is an indication of ill health. At the same time, these societies are continuously involved in killing Muslims.

As is always the case for the believers, although this is difficult on the surface, it is ultimately good for us and can be part of a strategy.

For example, female converts to Islam in Europe and the US significantly outnumber male converts, and female Muslims are only allowed to marry Muslim men. Also, the majority of the Muslims killed in these wars are men, leading to a surplus of women. This surplus is further augmented by the fact that many men move to Western countries to work, leading to a number of situations where women significantly outnumber men.

Polygyny allows the society to effectively harness the reproductive power of the population and offset the continuous killing.

Certainly, polygyny is very difficult, but the reality is that the vast majority of women want to have children, and two factors seem to strongly affect a woman's willingness to tolerate polygamy— economic circumstances and religiosity.

Economic Reasons

Women who are from a tough enough economic background will accept polygyny for economic reasons because however jealous they might get, the threat of death or starvation or living in chronic insecurity is far worse than the inconvenience of emotional rivalry. In traditional societies, the household is a site of economic production that requires both a man and a woman, but the presence of a woman in the house has to be more or less constant for a number of processes of production, including food preparation, agricultural tasks like caring for vegetables and animals, and manufacturing medicines, household items, garments and textiles.

This economic structure becomes more prevalent when a country's infrastructure and industry is bombed into oblivion.

In the absence of modern state institutions, the presence of a man is very much necessary for security, as well as bringing in resources through tasks that are less well suited to women, like armed combat or harsh journeys for the purpose of trade. As such a man who is successful in these pursuits can fill the minimum requirements for the maintenance of multiple households.

Under these circumstances, the value of a man is much higher, and the cost-benefit analysis for a woman considering entering a polygynous marriage are very different than is the case in a nation where the roles of both men and women have been largely handed over to the state. This is why polygamy is most common in countries like Somalia and Afghanistan, that are closest to this traditional economic order.

Religious Reasons

Polygyny is part of the tradition of the Prophets, and anything that brings us

closer to the Prophet ﷺ is a source of blessings. A religious woman is aware of this fact, and as such is willing to combat her human nature, as she is aware that our own desires, if left unrestrained, can destroy us. She would combat her jealousy through prayer and patience, and she recognizes that true happiness comes from Allah, and is not truly dependent on any human being.

If her husband's marriages are altruistic rather than lascivious in nature, she will also be supportive of her co-wives as an act of kindness and charity towards them. She may also be aware that there is a relative rarity of sincerely religious men, and an abundance of men with poor moral fiber. She would also understand that marrying a less religious man would affect her own religion, as well as the religion of her children.

Since the religious woman's main focus is already on the hereafter, and not this brief worldly life, she can tolerate co-wives if she believes there is spiritual merit in it. This is because the aim of her life is not enjoyment, but to worship the Almighty. And in the end, it is this connection to her Lord which is the greatest source of joy and fulfillment.

The Origins of Monogamy

The Athenian democracy and the ancient Greek political system in general was one of the first societies to strongly normalize monogamy. This may have been necessary in a democratic political system to preserve the privilege of citizenship. As in modern monogamous societies, ancient Greek men by no means had exclusive sexual relationships with their wives; rather, the children resulting from their additional relationships were illegitimate.

This effectively allowed keeping political power within certain families. Slave classes are necessary for maintaining democracies due to the amount of time required for political participation, and polygyny would have been the beginning of the end for the Athenian democracy, as it would have opened up political participation to those of slave lineage. This could easily have destabilized society, as it would have been likely that the children of slaves would probably vote to increase the rights of slave or even abolish slavery, which would have threatened the oligarchy.

It's interesting that the Greeks considered monogamy, along with democracy, to be one of the points unique to their culture which made them superior to the rest of the world.

The desire to preserve political power within a family is one reason why royal families in Europe are so inbred, and monogamy is the means by which it is achieved.

In societies where polygamy is allowed, it tends to be the richest and most influential men who are polygamous. In Islamic law, all children of wives (and children of concubines as well) are born free, with equal political rights. This acts as a natural channel for redistribution of wealth as wealthy men have multiple wives, since all of the offspring are legitimate heirs.

This is a fine example of how Islam channels human nature toward the benefit of society, rather than trying to repress it. In this case, the natural male tendency to have more than one partner serves the economy by generating by breaking up agglomerations of wealth. Greater distribution of wealth brings wealth into circulation, which in turn generates employment, in a virtuous circle.

Historically, the growth of romance began with the aristocracy and the

bourgeoisie. By bourgeoisie, I mean the wealthy merchant and artisan class. In other words, romance is a luxury, so the higher up the economic ladder we go, the bigger the role romance is likely to play in mate selection.

In America I may not be a rich man. But in a number of other places I am quite rich. If I were to remain in America and be monogamous I might have affairs with other women or homosexual affairs. If I kept this secret I might be able to have a relatively happy marriage and still fulfill my desire to have multiple sexual partners. Although who knows what kind of psychological and emotional damage this would do to my other sexual partners who did not have the status of wife.

In this scenario I would probably have no more than 5 legitimate heirs. More likely two or three. This would keep my wealth and capital concentrated in the United States with my heirs, and preserve the cultural privilege of my ethnic group as well as my nationality.

If, however, I try to seek to fulfill my natural desire through marriage in a legitimate and Islamically acceptable manner, I could easily seek out a wife in one of the many regions that does not have as much privilege and wealth as the United States. The result would be that I would be quite likely to have more heirs in this way and that these heirs would be from severely economically disadvantaged backgrounds, since their mothers would have to have been hard up enough to consent to a polygamous marriage with me.

The result would be an elevation in the status of some very downtrodden and disadvantaged women, and some capital being distributed among their children. Our children, if they retained their connection to their home countries, would represent a channel by which wealth flows from a rich (obese) country, the United States, to a poor (malnourished) country. This would make America healthier, since most illnesses in America result from having too much.

It would make the poor country healthier, since many illnesses there result from not having enough. It would increase the rights and position of my other wives, and probably bring benefit to their families as well, increasing overall demand in their home economies which in turn would generate jobs, and lead to more demand in a virtuous cycle.

This is much better than simply giving charity, because if you only give money, the money is spent and people often end up back where they were

in the first place. But if you give people a share of capital, for example, a portion of a company, land, machinery, it gives them a sense of connection to the capital and a stake in the well being of the country where the capital is. It also gives them a sense of equality and self worth, because rather than being recipients of charity they are owners of the wealth.

Marrying women from different cultures also increases a sense of intercultural connection among the siblings, which supports the development of a sense of interconnection between different cultures.

Problems with Quantifying and Assigning Value to Wealth

A society is like an organism. If it is growing, it means it is young and healthy, whereas if it stops growing or begins to shrink, it means it is sick or dying. There are also phases of expansion and contraction within larger growth cycles.

An economy should not be judged only by overall output- it should also be

- 1) judged by the distribution of wealth within the society,
- 2) the social connectivity or level of sharing in the society, and
- 3) the income level relative to the standard of living.

There may be plenty of money on the aggregate level, but rampant inequality has other economic costs like crime and addiction that counterbalance income/output.

Social connectivity means that economic transactions are taking place without monetary value attached to them. For example, when a neighbor gifts produce from their garden, and the recipient of a gift then bakes some pies and gives one to the owner of the garden to show their appreciation. Organic produce and high quality artisan pies can be quite expensive, so there is quite a bit of value being exchanged here, but this is not counted in the assessment of the economy. The societies where this kind of value exchange is most prevalent are the ones most likely to be labeled as “poor” by modern orthodox economics.

If a society is structured in such a way that having a car is a basic requirement for full social participation, you can't say that a person there with a \$1000 a month income is really better off than a person who makes \$600 a month, but who lives in a society where they can walk to their workplace or to visit their friends and family, and who suffers no negative consequences from their lack of car ownership.

Again, this is because the utility of not having to pay for the purchase of a car, gas, maintenance, insurance, registration, and time lost in traffic, and stress, has no clear monetary value, and can thus not be easily calculated and

included in traditional models for measuring economic performance.

Because people have been indoctrinated to believe that economic value with monetary value assigned is more important than economic value without monetary value assigned, having children appears to be a burden rather than a wealth, since a lot of the value of children is simply stuff that you can't buy.

Since people have also been trained to believe that we ought to live a lifestyle with more emphasis placed on economic value with monetary value assigned, they believe that they are doing some service to humanity by having less children. And this is in spite of the fact that a single person in the United States can often consume more resources than a family of 10 in Africa. And often, even with this higher rate of consumption, the American may still be less happy than an African that consumes 1/10th the resources.

Military, Medical, and Prison Industrial Complexes

The logic of disbelief in Allah boils down to trading visible benefit for invisible harm. This is similar to shortsightedness, where a person can see objects up close, but is unable to see objects far away. Indeed, disbelief is likened to blindness in the Quran.

The medical, military and police systems in the United States suffer from this same tendency to trade short term benefits for some for long term harm. When the solutions to crime, disease, and war become specialized industries and livelihoods depend on them, there is an unconscious imperative to ensure that crime, disease, and war continue. If a solution to these problems actually brought a solution, the companies marketing the cures would rapidly become insolvent.

When one of these industries reaches a sufficient size, economic interests are centralized to such an extent that profitability can be enhanced by influencing legislation. As power and influence is concentrated by the collusion of private industry and the state, major conflicts of interest appear. When the power of legislation is unconstrained, as in a democracy, society truly becomes a “war of all against all,” as more resources are devoted to the battle between interest groups.

This system also tends toward monopoly power. The manufacturer with the most wealth can use the wealth to influence legislation in such a way that competitors are disadvantaged, thereby augmenting the wealth and influence of the largest manufacturer(s) still more. Since legislation is based on an electoral cycle, politicians tend to work in concert with those corporations with the most ready capital, which naturally favors the preference of short term profit seeking over long term social benefit.

This system thereby favors those who are most willing to engage in business practices that are detrimental to consumers in the long term ensuring maximal repeat business.

If a state is not centralized and powerful enough to enforce this kind of legislation, natural forces of competition will prevent these abuses. This is the heavy price of a large government that tries to regulate a permanent state of consumer protection— regulatory bodies which were originally created for the protection of consumers can also be utilized to

exert influence on industries to the advantage of certain players in those industries.

And of course, the centralizer of power par excellence, is interest banking. There is no other institution that so thoroughly ensures that the rich become richer and the poor poorer as interest. As for the source of influence being exerted in favor of interest banking, we need to look no further than where the largest concentrations of capital are located- New York and Switzerland, also the seats of the two headquarters of the United Nations.

Of course, the harms caused by these practices are both abstract and cumulative- meaning the harm caused is not readily visible, and there are enough factors involved in these scenarios that plausible deniability is possible. Everything I am saying can be disputed by a range of tactics, particularly if there is enough funding to hire PR managers, lawyers, and media firms to diffuse any sort of concerted attack on the centers of capital. In other words, through a process or misdirection, profits and wealth are obtained by causing suffering both in remote locations, and in the future.

Divine Grace in Unlikely Victories

My dad once told me an amazing story about some prisoners who escaped from a prison camp in Siberia and ended up traveling thousands of miles through wilderness and survived. The story fascinated me, and this fascination points toward something essentially human.

Most people can relate to the stories of someone who is oppressed, and love stories about overcoming oppression. I am even happy to hear about the escape of genuine criminals, because I know that life imprisonment is much more cruel than execution. It is a form of torture of the soul.

I think this is why people like movies like 300, which documents a battle between the Spartans and the Persians where the Spartans were severely outnumbered. The idea of an out manned and outgunned force making a stand has a real appeal.

Especially those who have been bullied appreciate the sense of triumph and justice when someone stands up to a bully and knocks him out.

There's something inspirational about hearing of a struggle against impossible odds. I think that this is somehow a reflection of divine grace. The more unlikely a success or victory is, the more it makes you aware of the fact that there are forces at work that are beyond our perception.

The Essence of Good Manners: Explaining the Kindness of Muslims in Egypt

I realized something while living in Egypt and observing the manners of the people; the essence of good manners is being aware of the needs of others and seeking to fulfill them.

Everyone has the need to be loved and accepted and I think this is part of the wisdom of Islam in teaching us to give gifts, because a gift is a great expression of love.

It makes me very happy when people are very aware of my emotional and mental state and trying to anticipate anything they can do to try to make me happy. People seem to do this a lot for each other in Egypt.

Many visitors to Egypt, and Egyptians themselves complain about the garbage in the streets of Egypt. I was walking along and thinking to myself, why is there trash in the street? And the answer dawned on me; it's because they are not superficial. They're simply focused on other things.

I realized this while traveling in Africa a decade ago. In Africa, the source of beauty for the people is their connection with each other. Unlike Europeans or Americans, they don't search for beauty so much from animals or plants or nature. And really, ultimately it seems to me that deriving a sense of beauty from human beings, as difficult as it may be for me after the trauma I have been through, is more fulfilling than deriving a sense of beauty from other parts of nature, because humans are both what I can relate to most and what can relate to me most.

It seems so common in America for humans to connect through animals. It is as if animals are a safe space where we know we are not going to be criticized or belittled. In America there is really no question; dogs are nicer than people. In the Muslim countries I have been there seems to be many people who are as loving and kind as dogs. And they are this way even if you don't feed them!

I think what increases compassion in a strong and protected family environment. I am not trying to say Egypt is a utopia by any stretch of the imagination. It is not. But I think we all have things to learn from other cultures, and I think the strong emphasis on protecting and honoring women

as the core of the family and the heart of society is something that would lead to a more compassionate and mentally sound society.

What is the basic prerequisite that makes a person willing and able to connect with others, be aware of their needs, and try to fulfill the needs of someone else? I believe it is trust. And trust is learned through our connection with our family.

Having a mother who is consistently there, day and night, and supporting and loving you and listening to you and advising you— this is the keystone to the whole family structure.

I wish people realized how harmful it is to have a mom who is working, trying to support her kids, stressed out, and puts the kids in front of the TV to have some peace and quiet. The TV then wants to program them into being tools for corporate profit at any cost— even at the expense of their spiritual, mental and physical health.

In Egypt, I realize how beneficial it is for kids to have a mother consistently in the home, stable, relaxed, and holding down the fort with the love, support, and wisdom of her relatives and parents backing her up.

I realize that a lot of the connection I used to have with people in America was through media. We connected on the basis of the video games we played, the music we listened to, or the movies we watched. It's almost like I never learned how to really directly connect with people.

There was always some kind of intermediary, some kind of focus that also contained some other kind of programming. If you have ever seen the Matrix, the feeling when they go into the matrix for some reason is how I feel when I go to the United States.

There is still some benefit to experiencing the culture I grew up in, however, because it helps me to understand the nature of my own mind. Among the signs Allah has given us, the signs of Him, is our minds. It is amazing that a human mind can be shaped out of dirt and water and then be given life. That is some stunning craftsmanship. Allahu akbar.

From “Nobody likes you” to "Everybody likes you"

I was leaving the mosque after the sunset prayer one evening, and I gave my salaam, the salutations of peace, to a brother who was sitting there. I stopped and tried to chat with him in my limited Arabic for a bit.

And he said something very casually to me that no one had ever said to me before: "Everyone likes you." This was a really nice thing to say and made me happy, I prayed to Allah to love him. When you pray for someone the angels make the same prayer for you.

I had a flashback to middle school. I tried to make a joke in history class, but it fell flat. Some kid, whose dad was probably an alcoholic, looked at me and told me: "Nobody likes you."

This was really not a good feeling. I think most people have never had anyone say this to them, but those who have heard those words know it doesn't feel good.

It wasn't true, but it is a good example of the general tone of cruelty that characterized my life in public school. This can feed into a vicious cycle of acting out because of the cruelty, which causes people to dislike you more, which can cause you to act out more.

Anyway, it reminded me of Allah's promise in the Quran, that with difficulty comes ease.

فَإِنَّ مَعَ الْعُسْرِ يُسْرًا

“And, behold, with every hardship comes ease”⁶⁷

67. Surah Ash-Sharh: 5

The Kindness of Hijab and the Economic Utility of Selfishness

Almost all women dislike it when their partner looks at other women while they are out together. I don't completely understand the reasons why, and I don't care to try to understand it completely. Suffice to say, if I, as a man, check out other women while I am out with my wife, I can be sure that it is going to hurt her feelings. I have found that this is broadly true for nearly all women.

Generally speaking, moral behavior, manners, and compassion all dictate actions that show consideration for the feelings of others and try to avoid hurting others.

I can also say, as a man, that I definitely notice that many women have a tendency to dress in a way that attracts my attention- tight clothes, sparkles, bright colors, short shorts and skirts, low cut shirts, etc.

If I am walking in a park with my wife and making conscious efforts not to hurt her feelings by checking out other women, sometimes I succeed and sometimes I fail. I don't know if anyone has perfect impulse control, but I definitely don't. In the cases in which a woman's clothing is especially revealing or attractive, I am much less likely to succeed.

If we consider this issue in this light, it can be seen that standards of modesty and decency are not so much a matter of men imposing their will on women, but a matter of women showing consideration for other women.

When a woman dresses in an alluring way in public, her aim may be to attract potential partners and boost her own self esteem. The side effect is that it may result in hurting the feelings of other women. In other words, it is trading the general good for the personal good.

This trade-off becomes more acceptable the more "self-oriented" a culture becomes. Decisions are based on weighing costs and benefits. We each have a limited amount of mental power- the more we care about ourselves, the less we are able to care about others. The more value we allocate to our own benefit, the less important the benefit of others will become.

Selfishness promotes economic growth in several ways- one is that when

people share less, consumption increases, and so do profits. 10 people in 10 houses means more jobs for construction workers, appliance manufacturers, utilities companies, etc. than 10 people in 1 house. So there is a real economic incentive to encourage selfishness on a social level.

This is a much more abstract point, but it serves to drive home the nature of morality- individual acts of kindness foster the health of the whole society. While some believe that wealthier societies are superior, the levels of consumption in these societies are unsustainable, and this is directly linked to selfishness and a lack of sharing.

These levels of consumption deprive future generations of their sustenance, and condemn future generations to lives of scarcity and war- as has been the case for every technologically advanced, high consumption civilization, for all history.

Going back to the micro-level issue of standards of modesty in dress, it can be seen that the converse is true- when a woman dresses in a way that does *not* attract my attention, it is an act of kindness towards my wife, who will not have to deal with the negative emotions associated with her husband checking out another woman.

In other words, a woman fighting her personal desires and dressing modestly is an act of sacrificing personal good for the general good— an act of kindness and compassion towards others.

Early Marriage and the Advantages of Lower Income

Statistically, sub-Saharan Africa has the lowest rates of breast cancer.

As it turns out, having children at a younger age and breastfeeding is correlated to a reduced risk of breast cancer. Women in Africa tend to have children at the youngest age and generally can't afford baby formula.

People usually consider Africa to be poor or "less developed," but it seems that decisions that have advantages in one area often have disadvantages in another area.

It's ultimately a question of values.

Two issues here:

- 1) What can we measure?
- 2) What do we measure?

My personal metric for development is the family connectivity index. It's gauged by taking roughly homogeneous samples and measuring:

- 1) How many first degree relatives does the subject interact with in a 24 hour period.
- 2) How many instances of physical contact are there between the relatives and the subject (hugs, handshakes, kisses, pats).

Obviously this is much more difficult to measure than life expectancy or infant mortality, but it happens that feeling of connection is the single biggest factor determining overall life satisfaction, and also the factor where the so-called "developed" countries are lagging behind the most.

This is another area where lack of money has an advantage- it forces people to rely on each other's support.

Having money has advantages, but so does not having money, so maybe we don't need to focus so much on money?

عَنْ أَبِي ذَرٍ قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ يَا أَبَا ذَرٍ تَقُولُ كَثْرَةُ الْمَالِ
الْغُنْيَ فَلَمَّا قَلَتْ نَعْمٌ قَالَ تَقُولُ قِلَّةُ الْمَالِ الْفَقْرُ فَلَمَّا قَلَتْ نَعْمٌ قَالَ ذَلِكَ ثَلَاثًا ثُمَّ قَالَ
رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ الْغُنْيَ فِي الْقَلْبِ وَالْفَقْرُ فِي الْقَلْبِ مَنْ كَانَ
الْغُنْيَ فِي قَلْبِهِ لَا يَضُرُّهُ مَا لَقِيَ مِنَ الدُّنْيَا وَمَنْ كَانَ الْفَقْرُ فِي قَلْبِهِ فَلَا يُغْنِيهِ
مَا أَكْثَرَ لَهُ فِي الدُّنْيَا وَإِنَّمَا يَضُرُّ نَفْسَهُ شُحُّهَا

Abu Dharr reported: The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, “*O Abu Dharr, do you say an abundance of possessions is wealth?*” I said yes. The Prophet said, “*Do you say a lack of possessions is poverty?*” I said yes. The Prophet repeated this three times, then he said, “*Wealth is in the heart and poverty is in the heart. Whoever is wealthy in his heart will not be harmed no matter what happens in the world. Whoever is impoverished in his heart will not be satisfied no matter how much he has in the world. Verily, he will only be harmed by the greed of his own soul.*”

The Relationship between Money and Happiness

A study was published where some researchers investigated the relationship between money and happiness.

The study looked at people with different income levels, and analysed life satisfaction and emotional well-being. There's been a number of such studies over the year, and they have yielded slightly different results, but the general pattern is the same; life satisfaction will increase with increasing income up to a certain point, but after that, the gains gradually decrease.

So, for example, the difference between making \$1000 a month and \$2000 a month yields much more life satisfaction than the difference between making \$10,000 a month and \$11,000 a month. Although the increase in income is \$1000 in both cases, it has a much bigger impact on the life of the person in the lower income bracket.

This is a fine example of the law of declining returns, an economic principle that states utility gained per unit from some input will decrease after a certain point. Indeed, some of these studies found that very high incomes can actually result in a reduction in overall life satisfaction.

The general optimum level appears to be somewhere between \$60,000 to \$100,000 a year. I have also seen mentions that individuals with net worth in the tens of millions tend to be considerably happier than those with only a few million, however.

Alright, so far so good, right? Well, not really. I'm very concerned about the impact that these studies will have, and there are some real issues with them.

For example, the biggest of these studies was supposed to be a cross cultural study, taking data from 1.6 million respondents in 160 different countries. But something's not right here.

Doing social science research in many countries, particularly Africa, Latin America, and parts of Asia, means you will be speaking predominantly to urban residents. In many places, the connectivity is simply not there to take an even sampling. The study in question here sourced its data from Gallup, which has frequently been criticized for its methodology. That's not to say the data isn't valuable or insightful, but it is shallow.

This highlights a more fundamental problem with the scientific method as a means of determining the truth or the right way to live. People are reading these studies and drawing conclusions about how to live their lives based on them, and are unaware of the issues with the data.

This study in particular clashes with my own experience, because I met many very poor, very happy people while I was traveling. Of course, I also met many unhappy poor people. I've also met a few desperately unhappy people with incomes in the \$60,000 to \$100,000 a year range.

So how to explain this?

One of the major factors is how much you look at other people's situations. One thing I noticed is that people in rural areas tended to be happier, at least in my estimation. You might think it has to do with less pollution, more exercise and contact with nature, etc. but my own theory is that these people simply spend less time in contact with people who are considerably wealthier than themselves.

I've seen this many times with children. A child can be sitting, playing with the toys they have, and completely content. But as soon as another child enters that has a new toy, suddenly the new toy becomes an obsession. Often a fight, and then a tantrum, follows in such situations.

You can get a feeling for this when you look at pictures of children in Africa. You see that they are all very close together. Part of this is just the culture, but it also has to do with the fact that they don't have much of anything to begin with, so they don't have anything to divide and differentiate themselves from each other. They probably spend much more time playing with each other than with toys.

When I spent time on farms in Colombia, I could stay for weeks in the country without spending money, but in a single day in the city I could easily spend \$10 or \$20 dollars. In the city, you are continuously seeing interesting and desirable things that you probably don't really need, but would still like to have. And I believe that therein lies part of the equation explaining why country people seemed happier.

We can't underestimate the power of television and the internet in this situation. I have not observed the same trend of happiness in the United States or Europe when it comes to country folks. And I think this may have

something to do with the fact that they are more likely to have electricity, television, and internet connectivity. By way of the media, people see others who have much more, and compare themselves to them.

When you are taking international polls, you are very likely to rely on more connected people, and you're much less likely to include less connected people in the study. This is for the simple reason that to contact less connected, urban people (like those who don't have phones) makes your job as a researcher much more difficult.

Another issue is that people's self perception may be quite removed from reality. It's difficult to find "objective" quantitative measures of happiness, and you can always find people who really seem to be quite happy, and yet will complain about their life if asked. In fact, it may be the struggling and striving that makes them happy, while someone who has "made it" may feel a sense of aimlessness, although they might be very satisfied with their station in life.

It's also clear to me that one of the major drivers of economic growth is peer pressure. The overall performance of a nation's economy is nothing more than the sum of each individual's performance. To push up the performance of each individual, there needs to be negative consequences for not performing.

If you go to "poor" countries, you find that people can live in shacks made out of scraps and live off of social networks rather than money. You find, for example, that when a restaurant owner is done for the day and has some surplus food, they'll just give it to their neighbors rather than dumping it in the trash. Their neighbors will then in turn help them with watching their kids, or some other services which might involve exchange of money in a country like America.

In other words, you can live a simple life without much money, and generally be okay.

This is not the case in America. If you try to live in a simple house, you run a good chance of having your house condemned and destroyed by the city. Not having money in America is an incredibly miserable experience, and it makes you very willing to do things you really don't want to do to get money. Happiness itself is a tool for social control, as is pain.

It's important to realize this, because I see these studies pointing to the

conclusion that the relationship between money and happiness can be understood like simpler natural phenomena, like the relationship between mass, velocity, and force, ie. if we have this input, we get this output.

This is a total fallacy, and it points in the wrong direction. Just because a certain amount of money *on average* makes many people happier, doesn't mean it will do the same for you. And worst of all, it blows over the fact that it is *possible* to be very happy without a lot of money, if you have the right attitude and community.

This is especially important when it comes to resisting evil. It is plain to see that the system of social control that currently has humanity in a thrall manipulates people by means of happiness. It's also plain to see that the amount of material input required to maintain this happiness is continually increasing, since inflation is outpacing wage growth.

If we feel that happiness is a goal in itself, we will eventually sabotage our own project by overdosing on gratifying experiences and numbing ourselves to our own neurotransmitters. And if we insist on trying to perpetually maximize our own happiness, we will never be able to accept the hardship that comes with standing up and resisting forces of evil in positions of power over us.

Happiness is ultimately a chemical reaction and an addiction. Periods of sadness and hardship allow our brains and emotional bodies to rest and recuperate, lowering the threshold to experience the same level of happiness again. On the other hand, sustained pleasurable inputs will build up a tolerance in us to the happiness chemicals, same as any drug. This will eventually result in a feeling of emptiness which has reached epidemic levels in so called "first world" countries.

And this is only talking about visible phenomena, which are the tip of the iceberg. When you consider that there is a spiritual component to happiness that extends beyond death, it becomes even more clear how problematic the goal of being as happy as possible is.

To close, a consideration about the life of the Prophet Mohammed ﷺ One of his companions said about him.

"I never saw anyone who smiled so much as the Prophet."

This is amazing when you consider his life. His parents died when he was a child and he grew up an orphan. He was spit on, cursed, and beaten by his own family for opposing their religion. He had children throw rocks at him until he was covered in blood. He witnessed many of his closest friends and relatives being murdered. He was forced out of his home, faced extreme hunger and poverty, lost his wife to disease resulting from this persecution, and watched almost all of his own children die.

And yet it was remarked that he was the most cheerful and happy person.

You can derive happiness from material things. Or you can derive it spiritually. It's certainly a lot easier to do it with material things, so if you take a big survey, you are going to find a correlation between material things and happiness. But if you follow this path, your happiness will be destroyed by the loss of those material things, and ultimately, you'll probably be willing to go to war to preserve your way of life, because you will have no idea how to be happy without money.

War to preserve a materialistic way of life has become a permanent condition for America, and it's making a lot of people miserable, both inside and outside the country. And there's no way around it- what goes around, comes around.

Genocide in Slow Motion

Genocide means the eradication of a culture. A culture is a reflection of a way of life, and it is intimately bound to a place. Thus, gentrification and the displacement of urban communities can be understood as a form of “low-grade” genocide.

The market forces behind gentrification, often caused by left leaning urban ethnic Europeans (who are all ostensibly firmly anti-racist) is an example of a slow and gentle form of genocide, whereby people of one ethnicity or economic class are pushed into the meat grinder of the prison-industrial complex.

If you spend any time with America’s poor, you’ll be amazed by just how expensive it can be to be poor. While growing up, the poor will often turn to crime even to provide themselves with basic necessities like shoes and clothing. They are often arrested and imprisoned in the process, and once this crime is written on their record, it becomes very difficult to secure a rental contract.

Once someone has difficulty getting an apartment, they are then faced with the option of living on the streets, or staying in long term motel rooms which are usually considerably more expensive than a normal apartment. They are so expensive, in fact, that it’s all but impossible to afford the rent on a normal salary.

In addition to this, they often are lacking in kitchen facilities, meaning that the individuals in these circumstances often have to rely primarily on prepared food, which is usually more expensive and less healthy. They also generally lack the credit to have a bank account, and as such end up using check cashing services and prepaid debit cards with high fees.

This instability is a major cause of stress and depression.

The available options that can provide enough income to cover expenses include prostitution, pimping, selling drugs, fraud and robbery, and not a lot else.

This circumstance pushes people into a prison industrial complex which can be compared in many ways to the soviet gulags, although the American

system is possibly more psychologically devastating. This goes for those who are directly imprisoned and used for forced labor, as well as the families that are thrown into chaos and robbed of opportunities and psychological stability by the losing their relatives to a kind of living death.

Similarly, native Americans live under an ongoing, low key genocide. Again, the political left in the US is desperate to atone for their sins against native Americans and celebrates their culture. Yet that culture is bound to a mode of production that is prohibited and has been superseded and rendered obsolete by the victorious occupiers, so seeking to preserve it is in reality a constant reminder of what has been lost.

The destruction of cultures and mass killing, sometimes called genocide, is an ongoing process. A death in a forced labor camp or gas chamber is easier to point a finger at. But with an early death from heart disease on an Indian reservation, or a death in a factory in another country providing cheap inputs to the American economy and with unsafe working conditions, it is much easier to deflect the blame.

So in other words, the US has not stopped engaging in genocide, it has simply refined its methods.

Genocide is a profitable activity. This can explain both the success of the Nazi regime and the American empire. The Nazi approach was very direct, so although it was very profitable, it was also easy to demonize. The American approach is much more balanced and gradual, so some blame can be accepted and then whitewashed with promises of reform or appeals to democracy. In the long term, this gradual approach is much more sustainable.

If we consider the cold war and the impact of US backed economic reform programs worldwide, the number of people killed probably outnumbers the number killed by Nazis by more than ten fold. If we consider the eradication of culture as the main attribute of genocide, the displacement of traditional cultures and the cultural loss caused by politically and economically motivated mass media and 'education' is probably responsible for vastly more destruction of living cultural heritage than than the Nazis and ISIS combined. The Islamic world has never in history inflicted violence and strife anywhere near the scale of European colonialism and the eradication of native Americans and Africans, the transatlantic slave trade, and the first and second world wars, and the cold war.

Considering this context, it is clear that any narrative of the moral superiority of liberal democracies or the Western European cultural tradition, of which the dominant culture of the US is a part, is complete and utter manipulative propaganda. In American culture, references are continuously made to World War 2 that portray the US as a savior, and genocide as the greatest evil. This is little more than a shallow and shockingly pervasive narrative of the 'good democracy' versus the 'bad fascism.'

In reality, this ideological conflict is just one more chapter in the endless theological conflicts within Christian civilization, where ideology is used to motivate the masses to fight and die for the power of an elite who has no commitment to any ideals besides their own power.

Power, as it happens, is all that freedom really is.

Enslavement by Real Estate

In Afghanistan, Yemen, and many other Muslim countries, you find that almost everyone owns their houses. This is quite different than the situation in America, where you find a majority of the people either pay rent or pay a mortgage.

The average American pays about 37% of their total income towards housing. This means that for most Americans, more than a third of their total labor goes either to a landlord or a bank.

This makes home ownership seem much more attractive. The payments are comparable to what you would pay in rent, but you are able to preserve some of that wealth as equity in your home.

As more and more people seek to buy their homes, the availability of financing drives up prices. Banks are able to create money out of nothing, resulting in bidding wars for houses. Zoning laws ensure that houses are expensive, and limit people trying to organically increase population density.

As property values increase, rent prices also naturally increase. Poverty is effectively criminalized, making homelessness a truly terrifying prospect. Thus, the rising housing market drives an ever more frantic society.

Police harassment of the homeless becomes an engine of the American economy. Making homeless people miserable fills a similar function as public execution in medieval Europe, in that it terrifies the rest of the population into staying in line and being good, productive workers.

In countries like Yemen and Afghanistan where houses are simple and cheap and everyone owns their land, the same authorities attempt to control the situation by directly destroying their houses with bombs, and then opening channels for collaborators to migrate to America or Europe where they can rent, further driving up the prices of real estate.

And so it is clear that the majority of Americans are enslaved by housing. And the wars America wages are about enslaving free people, in the name of freedom.

Advantages of Having Less

There's a number of advantages that come with lower resource societies. You don't really notice these things until you have to do without them. And yet there are many benefits from doing without the wealth that we are used to in so-called "developed" countries.

Mirrors

I notice traveling from lower income countries to Europe and America, that in the "wealthier" countries, I somehow spend much more time looking in mirrors. Mirrors are much more common everywhere in these lands. And yet it seems that this time that I spend looking in mirrors benefits me very little.

I also can't escape the distinct impression that people in the countries without this abundance of mirrors, on average, seem to be less selfish and egotistical.

Tracing the history of mirrors back it seems like the rise of psychological consciousness is closely linked to advances in the manufacture of mirrors. It used to be only kings and aristocrats could afford them, and even then, they were not great quality.

As mirrors spread, however, it seemed that novels, biographies, and psychoanalysis spread as well. This is a natural consequence—mirrors very literally lead to more self reflection. And the more time you spend thinking about yourself, the less time you spend thinking about others.

We must derive a self-image from somewhere. In the absence of mirrors, this self image comes from other people. I observed that I feel much more at ease and happy when my self image comes from friendly people who are happy to see me, rather than a crystal clear reflection of the physical appearance of my face.

Less Internet Access

Struggling with addiction, I noticed a clear tendency to trade one addiction for another. If I decreased my alcohol consumption, my cannabis

consumption increased. If I cut cannabis, I started eating more candy. If I cut out candy, I started eating more bread and oil.

The same addictive potential very clearly exists with the internet.

Maybe it's being away from the levels of radiation associated with all the equipment, but not being on the internet for an extended period of time is somehow cleansing.

No Running Water

Having running water in a house is guaranteed to make you less appreciative for water, and more wasteful in water use habits.

When I moved to Egypt, we only had running water for a few hours per day. When the water came we became very happy, and felt as if it was a real blessing from Allah.

Because the water was limited, we also saved water in many ways I had never thought of in America. For example, we used the leftover water from mopping the floor to flush the toilet.

And it occurred to me— why had I been using drinking water to flush the toilet my whole life??

Likewise, taking showers according to the sunnah method, I use about a liter of water. I think of all the 5, 10, and 20 minute showers I have taken in the past. These showers could easily have consumed over 100 liters of water for a single shower, and the truth is they didn't get me any cleaner.

When I consider that millions of people, inspired by the Western way of life, are taking showers like these using non-renewable groundwater sources, and that there is war looming on the horizon due to water shortages, it's truly a sad thought.

Less Wasteful Consumption Patterns

America has risen to a position of global prominence by generating a level of consumption unprecedented in human history. As the saying goes, however,

the candle that burns twice as bright burns half as long.

One of the ways extra economic activity is generated is by making everything disposable. The environmental problems with this are well known. What is more often overlooked are the emotional effects of a disposable culture.

On the personal level, making a habit of throwing things away all the time actually takes an emotional toll. There was a saying from the (probably anachronistic) speech of Chief Seattle that what we do to the earth, we do to ourselves.

In the literal sense, this is true, because we are literally part of the earth in that our bodies are made from earth. On another level, though, our method of interacting with nature is the template for our interactions with each other. In other words, our personalities, not just as individuals, but also as families, tribes, and nations, are shaped by our interactions with the land and with nature.

If we develop a habit of mindlessly taking what we want from nature and then throwing it in the garbage as soon as its novelty wears off, this same dynamic will eventually affect our relationships with other people.

Beyond that, there is an emotional connection that forms with items. If we develop a habit of continuously abandoning and throwing items away, with time, we lose the capacity for this emotional connection. Many qualities we view as intrinsic, like patience or gratitude, are in fact skills that are honed and built by exercising them.

So just as one would lift weights to become physically stronger, the capacity to develop emotional bonds is built up by repeatedly bonding in small ways with items. The flip side of this is that when we have a bond and then lose the object of the bond, it hurts. And this makes us more hesitant to bond again in the future.

So it appears that it is not at all an accident that the culture of increasingly disposable relationships coincides largely with the growth of modern consumerism. Just as we throw away our possessions when we are done using them, we throw away our husbands and wives, boyfriends and girlfriends.

Star Trek Salvation

There's a saying that goes: "In a mad world, only the mad are sane." From the perspective of modern civilization, opposition from a traditional worldview appears as a disease, because it hampers the functionality of the modern system.

However, from the perspective of the natural world and the traditional cultures that live in balance with it, the modern system is the disease, and whatever tries to stop it, including fundamentalism, is the cure.

The crux of the matter is space travel and technology. If the modern world system collapses as previous energy intensive, technological civilizations have done, it will be proof that it did not really represent an overall improvement in humanity's condition.

This would invert the situation. Rather than modern beliefs being superior to traditional beliefs, the traditional beliefs would be vindicated. This is why the humanist perspective depends on the hope of avoiding this inevitable fallout by means of technology, hoping to make up for the resource deficits through new technology and resources from space.

Each previous civilization has recovered from its collapse by accessing a new pool of resources, by expanding. But we are now living in the first truly global civilization, so there is nowhere left to expand except for space.

The trouble is that the hierarchy necessary for the development of the infrastructure required to develop space travel technology leads to massive inequality and oppression, which adds a social dimension of collapse.

Because humanism is the prevalent ideology in places like the United States and Europe, for whom it is *raison d'être*, the media and schooling train the masses to ignore the impossibility of continuing this way of life, and instead implant them with hope of salvation from space.

Fundamentalists then become the enemy that would threaten this promise of salvation.

But the reality of the present is enough proof that this promise of the future is false. Far more people are harmed and more damage is done by the

psychological angst and material excesses of the modern lifestyle. By comparison, the damage wrought by religious fundamentalism is quite mild.

But casting fundamentalists as the enemy plays a very important role. Focusing on an external enemy diverts attention from internal problems that would require very difficult, long term changes to fix. These changes would also require admitting some fault, and giving up some of the moral high ground.

Focusing on the external conflict yields short term, gratifying results, but ignores the underlying cause of the conflict. In fact, it actually worsens the underlying problem.

The simple fact that we will never live in a Star Trek universe.

Pickles and Peels

I've always loved pickles- not sweet pickles, but the salty, fermented kind, with dill and garlic. I could drink a whole jar of pickle juice, though I regret it if I do.

In researching pickling I found out that it can make all kinds of inedible things edible. For example, if you harvest walnuts early, you can pickle them whole and eat the shell as well.

When I was young, someone told me that the peels of fruits and vegetables contain the highest concentration of vitamins and minerals. Later on, I learned that pickled watermelon rind is popular in Russia. I also learned that it is still eaten in the deep south of the United States for tradition's sake.

These traditions fit with the Islamic teaching of expressing gratitude by not wasting.

"Truly, God does not love the wasteful".

This is bad news for America, but it is never too late to stop being abusive and ungrateful. By the way, the word usually translated in the media as "infidel" literally means "ungrateful person."

For this reason, I also appreciate the traditions of using every last part of the animal when slaughtering. And as it turns out, many of the parts of the animal that are thrown away in America contain some of the most beneficial concentrations of nutrients.

This goes for citrus peels as well. My father used to make fun of my grandmother, because she insisted on the importance of eating grapefruit pith to avoid getting colds. And recently I learned that citrus peels contain flavonoids which have major benefits for the immune system.

I then remembered that candied citrus peels are an essential ingredient in traditional winter cakes in Europe.

Moving to Egypt, I found another level of pickling culture. Pickled turnips and carrots come with almost every meal, but one of the most impressive pickles is the pickled lime. These limes are split into quarters to speed the

pickling process, and then encrusted with black seed (black cumin) and chili.

This is a very medicinally powerful combination. I remember all of the many citrus peels and rinds that I've thrown away in my life, as well a pumpkin and watermelon seeds, and watermelon rinds. Who knows how much nutritional and medicinal benefit I missed out on.

This illustrates that when Allah commands us to do something, it is for our own benefit. By disregarding it we just end up losing out. Allah commanded us to avoid waste, and if we obey that command, it opens the door to a world of blessings.

Of course, part of the reason this was abandoned was due to the heavy use of toxic pesticides in modern agriculture. This is not such an issue in Egypt, because many times, rather than using pesticides, farmers can send their many children out to deal with pests by hand. You can truly taste the difference when you eat the food in Egypt. It's as if everything is high grade organic produce, but sold at very cheap prices.

Protein and Feminism

I took a Native American history class in high school, and I was taught that in most native tribes, women did 80% of the work. My first thought was to question why, then, did men have the higher status in most of these societies?

Now I realize that women's work generally involved gathering roots, fruit, and vegetables, and food processing. Men's work mainly centered around hunting, fishing and warfare.

Protein, mainly venison, buffalo, fish, and small game, may have only made up approximately 20% of the diet, but think about how people feel about a meal made up of nothing but potatoes and salad versus the same meal with a portion of fish or meat. For whatever reason, protein is often the most highly valued part of a meal. Americans are especially fixated on protein. I've been drilled my whole life that protein is the key to a balanced meal, that if you are having problems it might be because you are not getting enough protein, etc.

And gathering plants and processing food is generally much safer and less stressful than hunting or fishing.

Most methods of obtaining protein are considerably more strenuous.

Out on the water, conditions can change quickly, leading to rough weather, possibly capsizing your boat. Getting back to safety may require extreme physical and psychological exertion.

Even now, with outboard motors, fishermen die every year, and commercial fishing has a higher than average mortality rate than many other jobs. Even handling cattle can be very dangerous, as they can kick or stampede, bulls can lose their temper, and even a ram's horn that catches someone the wrong way could potentially gouge a femoral artery and prove lethal. I can't imagine the challenge of hunting whales in kayaks.

Hunting could, and often did, lead to injury. This is rarely, if ever, the case with gathering. So men would probably need long periods to recover their strength after hunting or fishing expeditions. Once home, they would rest and process and assimilate the intense experiences, contemplating, telling

stories and learning lessons.

Yet today, men are called lazy and maligned by feminists for this same behavior.

One should also not underestimate the importance of warfare. Even if all that is being looted is a canoe, some baskets, or a few trained horses- the labor involved in producing these goods absent industrial production is tremendous, and the utility of these goods is also huge.

Security itself has a very high value. Participation in battles is also extremely strenuous, and often may involve a prolonged period of recovery after a battle.

Leadership can also be an extremely strenuous task. It often involves being under extreme pressure and having to make split second decisions that mean the difference between life and death. The nature of hunting, sea voyages, and fighting would naturally be better for cultivating these skills, which could in part explain why most cultures have designated men as the highest authority in terms of decision making.

This gendered division of labor is both in our genes and our culture. The most successful societies from the perspective of evolutionary biology have been the most patriarchal, but this is also part of cultural heritage. Social gender roles are an extension of basic hormonal and physiological differences between men and women. These roles have been passed down for millennia, and we inherit them by interacting with role models in our communities.

We have to consider, before we condemn traditional gender roles outright, that these gender roles, as well as their genetic, physiological, and hormonal expression, represent a form of collective capital that has real utility. There is a very real risk of throwing the baby out with the bathwater if we focus on the negative aspects of gender roles and ignore the positive.

No consideration of any issue in this day and age can be complete without confronting the crisis of our time; sustainability. The industrial processes required for obtaining a surplus of energy large enough to design new gender roles causes many side effects which must be factored into the cost-benefit analysis of traditional vs. modern gender roles.

We all know the global supply chain in its current manifestation cannot go on forever, barring some technological miracle. However, why gamble the lives of millions of people on an abstract and uncertain hope when there are real alternatives today?

The idea that human ingenuity can completely resolve problems that have always been basic characteristics of human existence, as well as the idea that we can upend traditions that have been established over hundreds of generations in just a few generations, are representative of a will to power that is out of control. It's a refusal of the natural situation in which we found ourselves, and a desire to replace it with something better.

In other words, it's nothing short of a belief that we can design something better than nature; Allah's creation. This is an extremely wasteful attitude, because we are throwing away generations of accumulated genetic and cultural wealth because it doesn't match with a very new and probably very temporary mode of production.

Accepting nature means accepting times of plenty and times of scarcity. This does not have to mean completely rejecting all notions of change or progress. Rather, it means recognizing that something that is to our material detriment may be to our spiritual (or psychological and ethical) benefit, and vice versa. It means recognizing that natural laws embody a higher wisdom, and that we serve ourselves better by trying to accommodate these laws, rather than trying to change them to accommodate us.

So really trying to rearrange what we have been given is kind of a form of rebellion against nature that ultimately is destructive to our own selves, since those laws of nature flow through each and every one of us. And by laws of nature, I mean the basic rule set that holds the universe together.

These laws could also be termed the will of God.

The Internal Bias of the Scientific Method and Mixing the Divine and Human

People are often very motivated in criticizing the methodology of research which contradicts their views, and very quick to accept the methodology of research that supports their views.

With social issues, the amount of data available is so vast, that you can generally support whatever conclusion you want by selecting and handling data according to the right procedures. In the judicial realm, jury selection is a similar process for arriving at a desired verdict.

There is no denying, however, that it is possible to know the truth through empirical observation and the scientific method. But it is important to be aware that the completeness of our understanding of the truth that can be arrived at through observation is directly proportional to our perceptive and analytical ability.

In other words, we can know something of the truth through empirical observation, but it is a fatal error to regard this understanding of the truth as complete. Such an approach is a form of intellectual mono-culture, and just like agricultural mono-culture, it relies heavily on inputs from industrial civilization, and leads to unsustainable modes of production.

Traditional methods of agriculture are more labor intensive, requiring more labor for less harvest. But they build the productivity of the soil and maintain the health of the people who eat from it.

With forms of cultivating knowledge of the truth, this intellectual mono-culture has a similar impact. It causes us to focus on what is readily perceptible, and dismiss that which is more difficult to perceive as being less real. This is because it comes with the assumption that what is true is that which can be perceived.

Many have great faith in science, without considering that science is nothing more than an extension of the mental and sensory collective of humanity. Faith in science is by extension faith in humanity.

This is not necessarily a problem, but the extent of this faith is critical. When walking in an old house across a floor that may be rotten, you may have faith

that the floor will not collapse under your weight. This may be based on your knowledge of the age and condition of the wood in the floor.

But if you have excessive faith in the integrity of the floor while your knowledge is lacking, you run a greater risk of falling through the floor. Ergo the saying “Pride goes before the fall.”

Because science is limited by human perception and cognition, it tends to generate long term problems in the process of solving short term problems. For example, hydroelectric dams control floods, but lead to overall decreases in the vitality of ecosystems.

Many hopes for the future rest upon the belief that science will be able to resolve the problems it generates faster than new ones appear. If the prime resource science draws upon, human intelligence and perception, were infinite, this would be a reasonable expectation.

But we have more than enough data about the nature of human beings to know that this is not the case. Humans consistently forget their own mistakes and repeat them, even within living memory.

It would seem that with all of this continuous foolishness, it would be clear that humans are not in possession of perfect wisdom. Yet after centuries of being taught that God can appear in a human form, it is natural to conflate the idea of the divine and the human.

Comparative Advantages of Being a Woman in Muslim Countries

There are approximately 20,000 reported rapes in Egypt a year.

By comparison, there are 170,000-180,000 reported rapes in the US per year. This number comes out to 5.5 rapes per year per 10,000 people.

In Egypt the number would be 2.1 rapes per 10,000 people.

Going only by official statistics, rape is 2.61 times more common in the United States than Egypt.

Anyone who doesn't want to accept that there is less sexual abuse in Egypt would immediately suggest that rapes are less likely to be reported in Egypt. One activist working in Egypt, who is a very biased source, since they are advocating for women's rights, estimated that the actual number is approximately 10 times the number of reported rapes.

But activists working in the same field in the US describe the same pattern. Rape in the US is also vastly under-reported. One activist cited a study from the Center for Disease Control, which indicated that rape in the United States is under-reported by a factor of 7. In other words, there are approximately 7 times more rapes than are actually reported.

Even if the estimate of under reporting in Egypt is correct, and there are 10 times the number of reported rapes in Egypt, and in the US there are only 7 times more, this would make the numbers as follows.

The US would have 40 rapes per 10,000 people.

Egypt would have 21 rapes per 10,000 people.

This is roughly consistent with what I would expect having lived in both countries.

Egypt, among Muslim countries, is relatively relaxed when it comes to allowing for situations in which rape can occur. In Saudi Arabia, for example, mixing of men and women is traditionally much more strictly controlled.

The rate of rapes is also much lower in Saudi Arabia than in Egypt. And you can argue about the authenticity of statistics all you want, but the fact is that both anecdotal evidence and simple logic will point to the conclusion that Islamic rules on gender segregation dramatically reduce the incidence of rape and sexual harassment.

In attempts to fuel the war effort, people in the West often highlight the oppression of women, ignoring the advantages that women in these societies have. Other advantages, beyond less sexual harassment, are more respect and inclusion for women as they age, closer family support, and more acceptance and respect for women who choose to focus on being wives and mothers.

Is it oppressive to require women to have permission from their husband or father to go out of the house? No. It is power, and any power can be abused. But it can also be used for the benefit of those who are under authority.

Can there be any doubt that following such rules would reduce the incidence of sexual abuse and rape? Men understand men much better than women do. There are many situations a woman might naively consider as acceptable, but a man might reject, better understanding the danger simply by virtue of his understanding of men. Besides this, a woman walking anywhere accompanied by a male is vastly less likely to be harassed, assaulted, or raped.

Even for women walking alone, social experiments have shown that only wearing a light hijab dramatically decreases the incidences of harassment she experiences.

Many of the things regarded as advantages for women in the West actually come with a lot of disadvantages. Women may wear more revealing clothing, which might be enjoyable in the short term. In the long term, however, it leads to a culture where women are valued more for their appearance than their character. This leads to many psychological problems as women grow older, and lose the attractiveness that was the basis for their position in society.

The educational system is key here. Metrics have been designed by the West which point to the superiority of the West, and children are then taught to believe in the metrics.

The problem is that the metrics of progress have been designed from the very outset by the west in order to showcase their superiority. If I were to choose another set of metrics I could also prove that Muslim countries are superior. Which metrics a person deems to be most relevant depends on their values.

Mixing of Men and Women in Social Media

Allah says:

وَلَا تَقْرُبُوا الزِّنَا إِنَّهُ كَانَ فَاحِشَةً وَسَاءَ سَيِّلًا

Nor come nigh to adultery: for it is a shameful (deed) and an evil, opening the road (to other evils).⁶⁸

The ayat (verse, wonder, proof) mentioned above says not to even approach adultery. Surely, the actions begin with thoughts, and the thoughts begin with perception. So why open the door of your perception to communications and information that can implant thoughts in your mind that could then lead you towards immorality?

Social media is continuously flooded with images and ideas that spark such thoughts, and the channels for casual communication and making emotional bonds are wide open.

I understand that this has become commonplace in American culture, and so opposing it seems strange or extreme to some. But this was not so common in recent history, and as these types of interactions have become more prevalent, so has depression, family alienation, drug addiction, mass incarceration, obesity, sexual harassment, abuse, and rape, random shootings, and environmental devastation, along with other issues.

And there's a strong case to be made that all of these trends are connected with the trend of laxity in gender relations. Many injustices, whether wars, institutional racism, or even random killings, are committed out of some deep internal deficiency. Over-consumption is driven by a lack of satisfaction and fulfillment in oneself, and wars and oppression are often undertaken with the goal of obtaining more wealth, pleasures, and status to fill that void.

It was very clear to me while traveling throughout the world, that people in those societies where families are closer together seem to be more psychologically stable and happy. This is also apparent to me even in America— many statistical indicators also point to the psychological damage

68. Surah Al-Isra: 41

to children caused by divorce.

Once a person has this pain and sorrow inside of themselves, they have to do something with it. They can cover it with drugs, sex, or media. Or they can even try to cover it with fine dining and travel. This pain can also be expressed as anger and violence towards others. All of these actions are seeking to address a deficit inside.

There is no solution to these problems except for Islam. There is a fundamental need inside of everyone that can only be filled by connection to our Creator.

Trying to fill this need with anything else is a vicious cycle. It is a hunger like fire; the more it is fed, the bigger it becomes. The mind and body become desensitized to the pleasures derived from food, entertainment, and sex with time, and it is necessary to continually add an element of novelty.

And power, too is a desire. Many tyrants that cause a great deal of suffering are motivated by the desire for power just to try to experience unlimited gratification of the self. The innovation of American democracy is the idea that every citizen gets a small share in the tyranny.

America must know that it is evil. But there is a solution. Become Muslim and rule with the word of God, or submit to the Muslims, or be destroyed. These are the only choices America has. You cannot win a war against God. And if you willingly choose to wage war against God, hell is your ultimate destination.

Americans need to deeply and seriously research and consider if Muhammed ﷺ was truthful. They also must consider what the message he brought says.

The life of this world and all its allure will soon be gone, and all that will remain are actions.

Whatever wealth, knowledge, or power we have been entrusted with, we will be accountable for how we use it. So use it for good. Don't use the resources and ability that God has given you for financing and supporting a regime that institutionalizes racial oppression within its borders, and is even more violent and oppressive to those outside.

No matter how good our actions, we are all in need of the mercy of God, and Islam is a pure expression of the mercy of God. If we reject it we do so to our own destruction.

The gateway to Islam is the statement:

"la-i-laha-il-Allah, Muhammad-ar-rasool-Allah,"

"There is but one God, and Muhammed is the Messenger of God,"

Sincere belief in this statement is the key to God's mercy, and rejection of this is to reject the favor of God and to condemn yourself. And it's not something that is merely said, it's something that is lived with conviction, it is submission to the Creator and Provider, the owner of the highest wisdom, and the most compassionate. Indeed, Allah is the most compassionate, even if that compassion is beyond the scope of our limited experience and understanding.

Although I value the female friends I had throughout my life, I wish now that I had deeper connection to my relatives. Instead of bonding with my relatives, I bonded with my friends. And then the structure of our society broke those bonds— going away to college, to work, etc.

I could try to analyze and weigh the benefit and detriment of maintaining my relationships with female friends via social media. I don't know that I could ever reach a definite conclusion. But ultimately I recognize the wisdom of the Creator is greater than my own, and I must submit to his command, and close the paths by I might even be tempted to walk down the path of adultery; the path of insatiable desire.

Child Abuse in America

There are approximately 3.4 million reports of child abuse per year in America. These are officially reported cases only. If there are more than 3,000,000 reports officially filed every year, how prevalent is child abuse actually, how many incidents go unreported? How cruel and hard hearted can people be?

Given this dire circumstance that America is in, I am not able to understand how it is that people seriously think that it is acceptable for Americans to invade other countries and spread their way of life?

This is happening next door while you watch Game of Thrones. You may think that you are not being hurt by this because it is out of sight, but in reality this pain affects everyone in a community. Being part of a community is a responsibility, and this is on everyone's hands.

Alcohol, television, drugs— these are all methods of hiding from this responsibility, and the pain that comes from neglecting it.

How can Americans accept to continue working at jobs they hate, where a third of their income is stolen in order to murder people in the name of chronic overeating? To maintain the world's largest prison population, to maintain the highest rate of waste generation in the world, the highest rate of food waste in the world? And murdering millions of people in order to preserve *this* way of life? And if that were not enough, many then act as if this way of life is superior!

Meanwhile, Europeans have the same arrogance about their universal health care, solar panels, and social systems. And yet Europe is utterly dependent on the extreme violence and cruelty of Americans in order to survive. Europe and America, under NATO form one vile, arrogant, and treacherous unit.

I completely understand why people in America like dogs so much more than human beings, if this is the way that people are choosing to live.

Sexual Contact between Teachers and Students

Sexual abuse/relationships between teachers and students in schools keep increasing. In 2015, there were about 500 arrests across the US of teachers who had sexual contact with students.

There are all kinds of theories as to why this is happening, but nobody seems to be pointing out the obvious- maybe our ancestors weren't just being idiots for having separate schools for boys and girls! The vast majority of instances of student-teacher relationships or abuse are heterosexual in nature.

There's a very, very easy solution to all these problems, yet there seems to be no discussion about it. Stop mixing men and women who are not relatives in public places, and marry early.

Addicted to War

When I read about battles of World War 2, I sometimes get a familiar sensation. I first noticed that feeling when I began to understand the underlying causes of the war, and realized that those underlying causes have not been corrected.

It occurred to me that this actually has some similarities to the condition of drug addiction. What caused me to make this connection was an article by a psychologist titled: "Addiction is a Learning Disability."

That is, pain exists to teach us that our actions have consequences. If we hurt ourselves, it is meant to teach us not to repeat that action. Drugs are enjoyable, but most drug addicts usually damage their lives through the use of drugs, hurting themselves and those around them. If an addict does not learn from this experience, it means that there is some kind of a learning disability.

This can happen on a collective level as well. I've tried discussing the causes of World War 2 with many Americans. I've tried warning that if we don't address these causes, there will be another, more severe war. Almost no one is willing to listen, much less act. The usual responses are just to disengage, ignore me, or leave.

This behavior is a kind of collective refusal to learn. For the addict, the prospect of change is unthinkable. Once they have become dependent on the drug, leaving the drug would mean that they would need to fulfill the same need that the drug fulfills some other way.

Finding an alternative to drugs requires patience, enduring difficulty, and even changing the entire structure of your social life. Leaving the behaviors that leads to massive, industrial scale slaughter is very similar. To recognize and acknowledge a problem demands that we seek a solution, and the solution is not always easy.

For an addict to recover requires first and foremost a strong will to change. It's rare to find individuals who truly want to leave their addiction enough to really make this change. With a society, all of the collective social pressure results in a lot of inertia, making it even more difficult to stop.

The prospect of another great war is very worrying, especially when we consider the degradation of moral fiber. My grandparents' generation was much more meticulous about matters of honor, like telling the truth and keeping your word. This is visible in history as well; in World War 1, many instances of chivalry and honor were recorded. By World War 2, almost all such instances were gone.

The combination of decaying morals and increasingly powerful weaponry is not a good one.

Faith is the key to all of this. In order to make the sacrifices and weather the hardship of doing what is right, it is necessary to have strong faith. It is necessary to believe that there are consequences to our actions, and that death will not allow us to escape those consequences.

Without this faith, the temptation is to participate in the evil going on around us, and to participate in the destruction and suffering of future generations by handing off the debt to them.

America's Homeless Crisis

There are an estimated 7,500 homeless people in San Francisco. The city pays teams of people to force the homeless to move their tents every day, and then sprays down the sidewalk with disinfectant. Paying all of these people is not cheap.

In addition to this “service,” the city also provides a number of programs to help the homeless. In spite of these programs, the size of the homeless population is not decreasing. With all of these services, the total budget for the city's homeless services is \$284 million. According to the city's own statistics, this means the city spends over \$3000 per month for each homeless person.

In addition to this, a large number of the homeless probably also receive food stamps, social security, and disability from the federal government. It's not at all unreasonable to say that the amount of money that goes toward supporting the homeless in San Francisco may be close to \$4,000 per month. This is more than full time, minimum wage workers in the city earn.

One would think that with this amount of money, it should be possible to simply provide housing to the homeless.

If you spend time with homeless people, or actually try to help them find housing, you'll quickly understand why this is not the case. Most homeless suffer from severe mental health issues that most communities will reject them. Many suffer from PTSD; there is a disproportionate number of veterans among the homeless population. Nearly all have problems with drugs (including alcohol).

One mental health counselor who works with the homeless conducted a survey, and found that 60% of his homeless patients had been sexually abused as children.

We can't necessarily say that sexual abuse of children increases their likelihood of being mentally ill and homeless as adults, but there is a very strong correlation. There seems to be a close relationship between sexual assault, substance abuse, and homelessness. The homeless are more likely to be sexually assaulted as adults, and those who have substance abuse problems are more likely both to be sexually assaulted and to sexually assault

others. Of course, both those who are sexually assaulted or have substance abuse problems are more likely to be homeless.

When someone is sexually abused, a cycle begins. It causes them to lose trust in people in general, which in turn results in difficulty forming relationships. This often stunts the development of strong social skills, which leads to their being rejected by their peers.

When you find yourself rejected, one of the easiest ways to bond with others is through drugs. Drugs allow you to bond with others through an experience that momentarily drowns out the pain and anxiety that prevents you from connecting with other people. This can also easily result in situations conducive to abuse, which in turn deepens the vicious cycle.

Also aggravating this cycle is the fact that heavy drug use causes damage to a person which leads to being rejected even more. This in turn increases their need to turn to drugs to have any sense of happiness.

Discussions about addressing homelessness in America almost never mention the issue of abuse as a root cause. Instead, they focus on methadone treatment programs, building affordable housing, and other approaches that focus on the symptoms, rather than the cause.

It's understandable that no one wants to talk about the root cause, because it means deep soul searching that will probably end with the conclusion that fundamental changes are required. It is a broad problem, but since child sexual abuse, drug addiction, and homelessness all seem to be closely intertwined, child sexual abuse is a good place to start.

Sexual abuse of children, like homelessness, is actually on the rise.

Arrests for child sexual abuse in England and Wales are increasing, and data points to similar trends in the United States and Canada. Child pornography arrests have increased more than 200% worldwide, although this is partly due to the technology now available. A large majority of child pornography hosting IP addresses are located in the United States, Canada, the UK, the Netherlands, and Russia.

It's unclear if this is increasing because of more awareness about the problem and better reporting, or if there is actual increases. What's for sure, is that no one seems to think that it is decreasing.

This is a worldwide problem, so how do you even begin to get to the root of it?

We can begin by trying to understand why it happens. So, in what kind of situations does sexual abuse of children usually occur?

One clear factor that stands out; sexual abuse of children is much more common if there is drug abuse in a household. But the single biggest factor that increases a child's likelihood of being sexually abused is having parents that are separated. The children most at risk for sexual abuse are the children of separated parents living with their mother.

It's a complex topic, but my own experience indicates that drug abuse and child sexual abuse are two of the primary issues at the root of homelessness in the United States. There is no quick fix for these problems. Resolving these issues would take generations, and it would only work if the will to change is there. I see no indication that it is.

Not everyone who comes from a broken home is sexually abused. And not everyone who is sexually abused develops drug problems or ends up homeless. There are degrees of severity of abuse as well, depending on the duration and type of abuse, and the relationship of the abuser to the abused.

After going over numerous studies over a period of months, some clear trends emerge. After spending a fair amount of time going over the literature, I feel confident saying the single most effective path for confronting this crisis is to preserve and promote the integrity of families.

Statistically speaking, there is also a very clear link between broken homes and drug abuse. If divorce does cause drug abuse, we should see a spike in drug overdose deaths around 15-30 years after a demographic increase in the breakup of families.

The first big divorce boom was around 1950, after world war 2, the next big boom happened from around 1965 to 1975, as the baby boomer generation was getting married. So if there is a demographic link between divorce and drug abuse, we should see spikes in drug overdoses around 1965-1975, and then again around 1980-1990.

There is not quite as much data available here, but there is clearly two major increases in drug abuse. The first is in 1970, and the second is around 1985.

This would put the interval between the boom in divorce and the boom in overdoses at about 20 years.

The age group most likely to overdose is age 20-39, and this means that the children of those waves of divorce were part of the waves of overdoses.

Of course, data can always be selectively picked to support different points of view. But these data back up the impressions that I have gathered from many interactions with homeless drug addicts. Really, it should not be so necessary to prove this issue, because ultimately it's a matter of common sense. Broken families result in broken people.

So what is it that causes families to break apart? There have been many studies conducted, and depending on the methodology, they have yielded different results, but there are some common factors that are consistent across different studies.

Usually a family breakup is complex and multifaceted, but one study conducted by the University of Pennsylvania found that the most common cause cited for divorce is infidelity. Other studies have slightly different results, but all of them put extramarital affairs as one of the major causes.

Some surveys found that in the US, on average, 40% of married women and 60% of married men will have extramarital sexual activity in their lifetime. Wow!

So if we're looking for one single area where we can address the homelessness crisis, this would probably be the biggest point to work on.

So how can extramarital affairs be prevented? What causes extramarital affairs? An extramarital affair is not necessarily sexual, they can also be emotional.

When men surveyed the number one reason they cited for extramarital relationships was the attractiveness of the person who they cheated with. The next most common reason was sexual dissatisfaction.

It may seem strange to say this, but it appears that the single biggest way that we could address the homelessness, sexual abuse, and addiction crises, is by preventing people from finding persons other than their primary partner attractive.

The second biggest single action that would be to prevent sexual dissatisfaction. And what contributes most to sexual dissatisfaction? Being exposed to attractiveness.

If you are not exposed to an object of desire, you will simply not have the desire. It's well known that seeing food can stimulate hunger. There's also no question that you may be satisfied with eating simple food for lunch every day, but when you see a more aromatic or tasty meal, , and leave you feeling unsatisfied with your daily simple lunch (even if it's less healthy).

Exposure to exciting possibilities is a major contributor to sexual dissatisfaction. A study on pornography addiction found that when men see a new woman, that they receive a boost of dopamine, because the brain considers it as a new possibility to reproduce. Images of new women stimulate arousal in men, even if the man is already sexually exhausted.

Dopamine and serotonin receptors burn out from overuse, and reaching the same levels of pleasure then requires more stimulation. This may be connected to a recent surge in internet searches for incest pornography. As exposure to sexually stimulating experiences becomes more common, it requires more stimulus to avoid boredom. Incest shocks the viewer by violating a taboo, thus generating a feeling of excitement.

Even for men that don't have problems with pornography addiction, sexual imagery is increasingly common and intense in advertisement, television, and movies. As the saying goes, "Sex sells." In order to keep sales up, increasingly suggestive, sexualized advertisements become progressively more aggressive.

Perhaps our ancestors were not simply idiots for having standards of what "decent" clothing was. Standards of modesty were an important part of American culture in the not-too-distant past. In the south, before the civil war, some mansions were built with 2 separate staircases; one for men and one for women. The reason was to avoid the men catching a glimpse of women's ankles as they climbed the stairs.

In the past, a man could become sexually aroused just from seeing a woman's ankle. Imagine, with this kind of a mental condition, how much easier it would be for a man to be satisfied with his wife! Today, seeing an ankle is considered to be completely benign and uninteresting. It was also around the time of the civil war and industrialization that the

divorce rate began to climb. From less than 1% of marriages ending in divorce, the modern divorce rate is over 50%. The only thing that is driving down the divorce rate is the fact that many couples now don't even bother marrying.

But suggesting cutting off the causes of divorce is very economically impractical, because it would mean changing a number of things.

For example, consider the economic value of businesses that rely on mixing of men and women. Social events, internet pornography and social media networks, all derive much of their appeal by harnessing the attraction to the opposite sex. Many service jobs, like receptionists, waitresses, and baristas all rely on using women's attractiveness to drive sales, not to mention outright prostitution.

There's also a huge amount of extra revenue and consumption generated by sexualized advertising. By linking sexual desire to the desire for a product, consumption can undoubtedly be boosted. Recent studies have shown that the amount of sexual imagery in ads, and the total proportion of ads that feature sexual imagery, has steadily been increasing over time.

If the modern economy gave up on these methods of stimulating consumption and economic activity, it could easily lead to the collapse of the global economy. A major reduction in consumption and growth would lead to a chain reaction.

When growth is cut back, people lose their jobs, causing them to consume less, which in turn causes more people to lose their jobs. And since nearly everyone is drowning in debt, it leads to a chain of defaults on loans, which eventually results in credit crises and the collapse of the highly leveraged banking system. This means that the accounts of depositors simply disappear overnight, and you have hordes of very angry people wondering where their money has gone.

The shutdown of finance, and widespread unemployment means a number of industries shut down, which leads to other consequences. Economic hardship also amplifies the same cycle of mental illness, homelessness, and drug abuse.

More mentally ill and violent people also means more strain on the already overloaded prison system, and in the context of an economic crisis, the

funds would naturally be lacking to contain all of these prisoners. In lower income countries, it is much more common for large quantities of prison inmates to simply break out, since there is not enough money to pay adequate guards or to maintain the facilities at an adequate level.

A number of pathogens are resistant to drugs, and become more aggressive with each generation of drug. They are only kept at bay by the medical industry developing new variations on drugs every so often.

Likewise, agriculture needs more fertilizers and pesticides each year to achieve the same level of output. Since global agriculture is now based on mono-culture and heavily reliant on these chemicals, if the chemicals industry shuts down, blights will likely ravage crops growing on depleted soil, leading to a massive reduction in agricultural output.

Also, as economic inequality becomes more pronounced, holding back waves of immigration on the US and EU borders becomes more and more costly.

In short, there is a very real possibility that seriously addressing the issue of the destruction of families, (and ergo sexual abuse of children, drug addiction, and homelessness) could lead to the outbreak of plagues, famines, and war. This is why no one wants to talk about a real solution.

Most would rather continue sinking deeper into debt, and continuing to exploit women and destroy families. But this is bound to fail, because it does not avert these impending crises, it only delays them, and in so doing, aggravates the underlying imbalances, making the inevitable reckoning all the more severe.

Doing the right thing is not always the easy thing.

The Roots of America's Racial Caste System

Almost a century before the American revolutionary war, European indentured servants and African slaves united in rebellion against the British colonial authorities in America. The response was to increase the racial aspect of the caste system, which may have a lot to do with the ongoing racial tension in the US today.

In response to the rebellion, the authorities instituted a series of “divide and conquer” policies, including:

- Establishing new property rights for slave owners.
- Allowing legal, free trade of slaves.
- Establishing separate courts of trial for whites and blacks.
- Prohibiting blacks, regardless of free status, from owning weapons.
- Prohibiting the employment of whites by blacks.
- Allowing greater power for the apprehension of runaways.

This divide and conquer logic remains at the core of the maintenance of public order in the United States until today.

The Power of Death

When I first moved to Egypt, I remember praying the funeral prayer for a child at a mosque. A woman sobbed as the child's body was loaded into the car to go to the cemetery, and I could feel the grief pouring out of her. I felt chills inside myself, and I realized at that moment that I love death. My soul drinks up the energy of death like a thirsty, parched mouth drinks water.

It wasn't that I didn't commiserate or feel sympathy for the woman, but I could not deny the feeling of it felt like coming home. Being near death simply feels right, and the absence of death I had experienced in my life in America seems wrong.

At the age of 20, I realized I had never been to a funeral. No one in my family had died. When I traveled to Africa, I met a 13 year old boy who was running a restaurant on the street. He had two employees, aged 9 and 10. Both of his parents were dead, and he was supporting himself and his employees, and putting himself through school.

What really struck me about the boy, was that he seemed happier than me, and generally had a better attitude than myself.

My father finally died when I was 27. I remember sobbing, but at the same time I was grateful that I even had the capacity to feel so much emotion. I had spent so many years with my emotions closed off, it was as if the distance from death had left me numb. It might have also been that I shut off my emotions as a defense mechanism to shield myself from the pain of abuse, and subsequent bullying in school.

I wished that I had more family members who could die, not because I wanted them gone, but because the funeral seemed to be the only thing that could bring the family together, besides the wretched, gluttonous holidays of Christmas and Thanksgiving.

Before a battle, the Muslim general Khalid ibn al Walid once wrote to the enemy leader, warning him. He said, "I bring to you men who love death as you love life."

Some of the mystics of Islam have described death as like a wedding. Remaining alive in this world is a barrier that prevents us from being with

Allah, our beloved. Closeness to death is then a reminder of our beloved. And while of course I get a lot of pleasure and joy from being alive, I do anticipate the afterlife. Many people spend most of their time investing in this world and preparing for the future in this life. Death is then terrifying to them, because it will separate them from this what they love of this world. But for the one who invests his time, wealth, and energy into the next life, the opposite is true.

For those who invest in the life after death, death is just the gateway to pass through to what they have been preparing for all along. In a similar vein, it is recorded in the Bible that Jesus advised the people not to store their treasures in this world where rodents can destroy them or where they can be stolen by thieves. Instead, he advised that we save our treasures in the heavenly realm.

The ironic part of this is that the more sincere a person's commitment to the life after death is, the better the life of this world becomes, because as you become less attached to any outcomes in this world, you become less anxious for it. The Muslim scholar Ibn al Qayyim said "This dunya (world) is like a shadow, run after it and you will never be able to catch it, turn your back against it and it has no choice but to follow you"

This is the benefit of death— it reminds us that we could die any time, and that this world is temporary. This helps prevent us from getting too caught up in the life of this world.

A saying related of the Prophet Muhammed sums it up pretty well.

"Allah the Most Great said, 'If My servant likes to meet me, then I like to meet him; and if he dislikes to meet Me, then I dislike to meet him.'"

Of course I don't know if I will be accepted by Allah. But this is part of the allure of martyrdom. To sacrifice one's life for the sake of Allah can be a means of attaining Allah's forgiveness. The Muslims who marched with Khalid ibn al Walid were aware of the depth of their sins, and as such they were as happy, or perhaps more happy, about the prospect of being killed in battle as they were at the idea of defeating the enemy.

Explaining Egypt's Relative Peacefulness

Growing up in America, police states are spoken about as if they are something terrifying. And yet, when I actually moved to a country with no freedom of speech and no freedom of press, I found that I felt much safer. And this was in spite of the fact that I belonged to one of the main groups that was targeted by the regime.

Even before I became Muslim, I felt continuously harassed and terrorized by the US government and police.

When searching for an explanation for this feeling of tranquility and peace in the society, the explanations always lead back to Islam. Some of the reasons for this difference that came to mind are as follows.

1. Families are much closer which results in a higher level of compassion and empathy and therefore lower rates of violence.
2. The standard greeting is to make a prayer for peace for someone.
3. Since the labor cost is so low, things are cheaper, so there is less pressure on people to make money.
4. Since everything is cheaper, most people own their houses, which means people are a lot less stressed out. They don't have to make rent to avoid homelessness.
5. Egypt, unlike America, is the target of significantly less international hatred. They do not kill millions of people to support a highly wasteful lifestyle, and thus attract less aggression.
6. With a lower budget, the government can't afford a big enough bureaucracy to effectively enforce income tax, so there is less resentment and stress from that.
7. A lower government budget also reduces their surveillance capabilities.
8. More separation of men and women means less infidelity, and an overall stronger sense of security in relationships.

9. Almost no one drinks alcohol. A high percentage of violence and sexual assault in America involves alcohol.

These are a few points in my observation that I was able to come up with in attempting to explain why Egyptian society seems more tranquil and peaceful than American society. What is very frustrating to me is to see that almost every one of these points is being eroded, with direct pressure from foreign powers and international organizations.

Explaining Mass Shootings in America

Mass shootings in America are increasing in frequency and intensity. In the wake of each shooting, a huge debate about gun control begins. And almost no energy goes toward discussing the root cause. When I searched for Americans discussing the issue, I found only one neglected article by a Christian, decrying the fact that morality no longer occupies a central place in child rearing.

I completed my high school diploma in the US public school system. How many hours did I spend studying "science" and how many hours did I spend studying morality? I don't recall a single class dedicated to morality.

This is the inevitable consequence of a pluralistic society that tries to accommodate all beliefs. Lies are given equal status as the truth, and the truth ceases to have any meaning at all. Since morality is ultimately based upon conceptions of what is true, this leads to an increasingly fractured society.

But a lack of morals is an incomplete explanation. A majority of mass shooters have one thing in common; social isolation. They have difficulty connecting with others, often feel rejected and hurt by others, and this then crystallizes as a will to do violence against others.

This inability to form relationships with others often goes back to a bad family environment. Something goes wrong with the initial bonding, and people are left without the ability to form bonds with others. In the past, families had much more economic utility, and this kind of estrangement was much less common.

Moving production and education outside the household decreases bonds between family members, while increasing the bonds with teachers, co-workers and bosses. It is undoubtedly more difficult to learn to develop healthy patterns of social bonding with non-relatives than it is with relatives. If men and women mixing in workplaces leads to infidelity (as it often does), this also results in an emotionally traumatic home environment, where children learn to withdraw to protect themselves.

This trend itself can be traced back to the legal and institutional fabric of the civilization itself. In the past, the right of kings to rule was regarded as

divinely ordained. In modern government, however, it is believed that the government has the right to rule if it is successful in fulfilling the desires of the people.

Since the main desire of the people is to consume, they support whichever government will fulfill their desires. These desires are not quenched when they are fed, rather, they grow stronger.

This means that continuous economic growth is required for the maintenance of this system. This means that in order to survive, the state (government and economy) must continuously expand. Historically, in all democratic regimes or blocs (ie. Delian league of ancient Greece, or modern NATO) this has led to increasingly aggressive imperial behavior, and eventually, totalitarianism.

This pattern of rapid and continuous expansion is remarkable for its behavioral similarity to cancer, which is a disorder in which cells lose their ability to stop growing.

Maintaining economic growth requires the steady increase of demand for goods and services. One way to achieve this is to increase the levels of fear and alienation. The economic power of the United States, and the ever growing levels of fear, alienation, and familial disintegration are two faces of the same coin. And democracy is the legislative climate that makes this possible.

Democracy is an unwinnable war against nature, and mass shootings are in part a byproduct of this ideology taken to its extreme. This is one more case of Western civilization's whiplash effect. The "Enlightenment" philosophy was a backlash against extreme tyranny in Europe, but democracy emphasizes individual freedom to such an extent that it can only end up back in extreme tyranny, as totalitarian rulers will be required to maintain order when reserves of resources are exhausted.

Production, in the absence of modern industrial infrastructure, is dependent on our inner technology. Inner technology includes gender, instincts, and family ties. To effectively leverage these gifts, we have to submit to the higher wisdom of natural law, rather than granting ourselves the power to legislate away whatever we dislike about our condition. Accepting our condition may seem more unpleasant to us in the short term, but it leads to a far more fulfilling and healthy lifestyle in the long term.

The 2nd Amendment and Programming Decentralized Governance

In traditional hunter-gatherer societies, it is understood that all men, and in case of necessity, women, must act in a military capacity. It is only in highly stratified societies that warrior castes have been developed and solidified. The first step to creating a peasant class is to disarm the peasants.

Justice is literally the distribution of power- it means that rights are uniform throughout the population, and that if someone is born into a specific caste, that responsibilities are commensurate to privileges, and that likewise, shirking of responsibilities leads to loss of privileges.

There is hardly any more visceral expression of power than physical violence. In every society that I have studied, specialized warrior castes are used to defend an elite upper class from the lower classes.

To study the history of medieval Europe is to study a history of excessive taxation fueling the vanity of the elite, followed by failed popular rebellions which were cruelly crushed by the warrior caste—knights, in the case of Europe. The story of peasant rebellions is fairly consistent throughout European history; well trained and equipped knights crush poorly equipped and untrained peasants.

There are a number of notable similarities between the United States and the first Islamic state which was founded in Medina. One is that both were founded on the basis of migration. Another notable similarity is that there was a high degree of military participation and a relative absence of a professional army or warrior caste which was:

1. distinct from the productive class (ie. farmers, artisans) and
2. monopolized the use of violence.

The nature of the colonization of what is now the United States necessitated nearly everyone being armed. The constant skirmishes and raids by native Americans, bandits, or attacks by wild animals meant that farmers, trappers, and other laborers needed to keep their weapons with them at all time.

Institutional reforms intended to model the colonies along the lines of feudal

Europe failed miserably for this reason. The presence of an oppressed peasant class was dependent on severe asymmetry of military capacity.

This is why the very existence of a standing army was highly contentious during the genesis of the United States. It was understood that a warrior caste inevitably becomes a tool for oppression in the hands of an elite.

Instead, the militia system envisioned a dual system, where workers and farmers could be called upon in the case of necessity, with each commune responsible for the training and equipping of fighters. This method of organization, combined with guerrilla warfare tactics, proved adequate for repelling imperial aggression of Britain in the Revolutionary war and the war of 1812.

This form of organization is not sufficient, however, to perpetrate imperial aggression unless there is a clear need felt by a broad base of the population. The militia system was envisioned as a method of defense, not offense.

So if America was founded on the premise of trying to avoid the trajectory of Europe's feudal injustice and cruelty, why has it gone the same route, with a professional military/police class engaged in oppression and violence on the behalf of an idle and decadent elite?

While the ideals of the "enlightenment" that inspired the American revolution represented a major revolution in methods, it did not overturn the fundamental beliefs on which the civilization was founded. Instead, by means of secularism, it sought to supersede them. The essential conflict of the Protestant Reformation was not resolved, it was just repressed and relegated to the private sphere.

In seeking to shape this new political order, there were extensive debates, and there was an understanding that the decisions formalized as law would have effects for generations to come.

There is something similar happening today with cryptocurrency. Protocols of governance are being designed, and at the same time, developers are debating the effects that small design choices will have a hundred years in the future.

Bitcoin was intended to take economic power from the elite and distribute it more fairly, but developers of cryptocurrency protocols are trying to

preempt the possibility that power in these systems could one day become centralized. It is understood that centralization of the power of the network could lead to a repeat of the monetary system we are trying to escape.

Elections as Theater to Divide and Rule

American democracy has degenerated to the production of mutual loathing and terror, and the continual refinement of that process. The state must exploit the people to survive, but in order for the people to tolerate high levels of abuse and exploitation, they must feel that there exists an “other” that would be even worse than the state.

This has an internal and external dimension. Internal “other” might be other races, criminal gangs, or political parties. External others might be other nations and their political ideologies, or other religions. All of these play into a divide and rule mentality which allows the ruling class to exploit the masses.

Any divide in which people are at odds with each other can be used to divert their energy away from resisting or challenging the state. The use of many of these divides to control populations is well known, but what is less well known is that gender is also used for divide and rule strategies.

The women’s rights movement was a ploy to manipulate women into paying taxes in the formal economy. The bait in this trap was the illusion of emancipation, but also emphasis on abuses by men, and promising a rectification of the situation that enables those abuses.

The use of gender based sentiment to fuel mutual hatred among the population is becoming more apparent. Take, for example, the role of gender in the cathartic pageant of the American electoral cycle, typified by Trump vs. Clinton election.

It was as if the entertainers that design the elections need to come up with more dramatic archetypes each year to keep the interest of the people. The Obama election cycle centered on race; the Trump election cycle pitted the sexist against a woman. The hatred that such conflicts generate is harnessed to galvanize voters to action, thus legitimating a system that distracts them from the operations of unelected rulers.

Some US treasury officials wrote a book analysis the last 700 years of financial crises. They found that the reason financial crises continue to happen is because of the belief that the fundamental conditions that caused previous financial crises have changed.

It's not that we are not capable of realizing the truth; it's that we don't want to realize the truth, because acknowledging the truth would force us to make difficult changes.

The most important function of the presidency is symbolic. Theater expresses fundamental confrontations of conflicting values by using archetypes to bring the conflict into focus. Likewise, the electoral process combines entertainment with the crystallization of values.

This mitigates conflict, because it allows the viewers to live out their inner violence without acting upon it. If the viewers believe that the election is real, and will truly have an impact on the society, then it also gives them a hope for the future which can keep them from taking action.

Every election, this hope proves to be false, but the voters think “maybe this time is different.” This time the president is black, or a woman, or a billionaire not beholden to financiers. Thus, the empire is revived, and the fundamental structure which underlies it all, and is unaffected by elections, remains intact.

This dynamic tension— hope and dread, love and hate— replaces the traditional system of tribalism. People still have factions which they can instinctively cling to, but instead of these factions being based on family, they are based on competing streams of enlightenment philosophy.

Once you realize this and detach from this process, it feels as if a great load has been lifted from your chest. At the same time, participants in this system seem to realize its importance, and begin to attack those who reject it. The stronger your rejection becomes, the stronger the attacks against you will become. Belief in this system is, somehow, a key element of American identity, and opposing it is viewed as hostility.

But it is very important to oppose this system, because it generates artificial divisions which tear families apart and poisons the civic life of society. This is visible in the increasing polarization of liberal democracies around the world. As the oppression and inequality becomes more severe, increasing levels of hatred between the people are required to prevent them from turning against the lords.

Increasing distance between the factions is required, because the reality is that we are not so different. We can only perceive each other as such if we

are isolated from one another. Isolation begets hatred, because if we truly saw each other, bonding takes place.

We can see that we are all motivated by the same things, and that by fulfilling the needs of others we fulfill our own most basic need- the need for acceptance and appreciation. This is why true Islam will always be the enemy of this system, because true Islam provides a context where bridges and bonds form between people of all different backgrounds.

This is why the US sponsors regimes around the world that support sects of Islam that deviate from the essential message of unity of authentic Islam. Maintaining divisions among the people and pitting them against each other not only serves to protect tyrannical rulers— it also increases consumption and materialism. Isolated people become depressed and rely more on material goods for satisfaction, driving economic growth.

This frantic economic growth is part of the core logic of the cycle of world civilization. Production reaches such high levels that the society becomes saturated, leading to mass unemployment. Then a war sheds excess population and destroys everything, which enables the next cycle of growth.

Torture and Unwinnable Wars

Reports have reached me from Muslims who were tortured by the CIA for days. This was justified in mainstream discussions on the grounds that information could be extracted through torture which could avert attacks and save many lives.

But upon release, some of these Muslims were asked what questions the torturers asked. They replied that they didn't ask any questions at all. The purpose of the torture was to instill fear and assert dominance.

This may seem shocking, but in most Muslim countries, the physical torture is more severe than what the CIA typically do. In fact, the CIA hands Muslims over to certain regimes for this exact reason.

Someone once asked me why the torture at the hands of tyrants in Muslim countries is more severe than is the norm in America. I replied that it was probably because they have stronger faith, so more violence is required to try to deter them. It's also just a result of having less money. People can be either bought or controlled with violence. When there is less money available, cheaper methods are required.

But torture is ultimately ineffective in fighting the truth.

Hardship can increase people's commitment to ideals. This is faith, although it might not be faith in Allah; it could be other ideals. For socialists it might be equality and justice. For capitalists it might be economic development and quality of life. And those who believe in their ideals strongly enough might be willing to sacrifice their lives for these ideals.

The process of suffering for the sake of ideals forces a person to reflect deeply on those ideals. It forces them to seriously consider if it is really worth what they are going through. If they decide it is, the strength of their beliefs will increase as a result of this process.

In a war of attrition, ultimately, it is commitment to ideals that determines the outcome of a conflict. And this is why it is impossible to defeat with violence and ideology that is based upon truth.

Leaving the Servitude of the Devil

It should be obvious to anyone with a conscience that supporting the US government either morally or economically is not the right thing to do. And yet, the prospect of withdrawing this support comes with real financial threats. Most jobs have taxation built into them, and attempting to earn a living in a way that does not involve taxation often means a major reduction in income.

But when facing this conundrum, it could be helpful to remember the biblical parable: “It is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven.”

A similar sentiment exists in the Quran:

الشَّيْطَانُ يَعِدُكُمُ الْفَقْرَ وَيَأْمُرُكُم بِالْفَحْشَاءِ ۖ وَاللَّهُ يَعِدُكُم مَغْفِرَةً مِنْهُ وَفَضْلًا ۗ
وَاللَّهُ وَاسِعٌ عَلَيْهِ

“Satan threatens you with poverty and orders you to immorality, while Allah promises you forgiveness from Him and bounty. And Allah is all-Encompassing and Knowing.”⁶⁹

This is also reminiscent of the story of the tribe of Israel after leaving Egypt. They were miraculously provided with blessed manna in spite of their poverty, but those with imperfect faith sought to hoard the manna against the command of Allah.

One who walks in the path of Allah is provided for day to day by the grace of Allah, but the faithless one wishes to secure himself against the future. His life thus becomes filled with anxiety, because he relies on his own finite power rather than the grace of his Lord.

So indeed, there may be less money when one ceases to serve satanic systems like that of the United States. But it is the right thing to do. Leaving the illusion of security that they provide to their servants is leaving the servitude of the devil, and entering into the service of the Most High. As a person increases in opposition to these forces, so will their hostility

69. Surah Al-Baqarah: 268

towards the one seeking to exclusively serve his Lord. But if anyone is sincere in their rejection of evil and their desire for justice, they must be prepared to make sacrifices. They must also be willing to abandon that which would numb them or distract them from the reality of the situation—drugs, alcohol, television, and music should be eschewed.

Instead we should examine what it is within ourselves that inspires us with the willingness to make personal sacrifices for a higher good. Whatever that may be, we should seek it out.

And the ultimate higher good is Allah. Allah is the embodiment of all of the lofty ideals that people strive for; justice, equality, compassion, and peace. By dedicating ourselves to the service of Allah, we dedicate ourselves to the service of all of the most beautiful ideals.

True Freedom

America has used freedom to justify killing millions of people. The concept of freedom is at the core of the foundational ideals of the nation. And yet, those who kill and die for this concept don't seem to have a grasp of what it really means.

True freedom does not mean the ability to do what one wants. Rather, it is to be secure in the source of your fulfillment. The prisoner who is content in the presence of his Lord is far more free than a wealthy man on a yacht in the Caribbean, enslaved by his desires.

Who seeks freedom through material wealth becomes a prisoner, because it is certain that he will lose all that he strives for. But who has the Infinite as his goal is freed from all want, because he drinks from a wellspring that has no end.

This freedom is not obtained by seeking power, but rather by recognizing our own weakness and our need of the One who has no needs. Through a strong link to Allah, it is possible to obtain a satisfaction that frees us from any dependence on material circumstances, and that no one can take away from us. What truer freedom can there be than this?

President: An Institutionalized Scapegoat

If you view things from a high enough level, it's clear that the most important processes of government are consistent across the different administrations of the electoral cycle. For example, the powers that the state needs to crush any kind of a popular uprising in America were gradually written into law under the pretext of fighting Muslims. This is a policy maintained by both parties.

The border has also been consistently tightened over the last two decades. This makes sense, because the US border with Mexico actually serves an agenda much bigger than protecting wage levels. It also drives up cocaine prices, which maintains a lucrative source of funding for CIA black ops, as well as driving the growth of Mexican gangs. The state then steps in as the savior to protect the people from these gangs by tightening border security even further, in a vicious cycle.

This also serves to drive the arms industry, of course, which is a mainstay of the American economy.

The Presidency is useful as a barometer for public sentiment and discourse, but it is very unhelpful for understanding the actual functioning of the system.

One maxim of power states: "To understand power, follow the money." Following this line of thinking leads to the conclusion that national politicians, including presidents, are little more than servants for money.

With \$18 trillion in debt, almost 10% of tax revenue goes toward interest payments, meaning the government is effectively in a stranglehold, and any attempt to shrug off this debt would result in a total collapse of the American economy. The President effectively acts as the "fall guy" who takes the blame for economic performance which is in reality beyond his control.

Default may happen anyway, and the cries for blood can be appeased by sacrificing whoever the President at the time happens to be. It seems that it is probably only fit for the hopelessly idealistic and ignorant, or the maniacally narcissistic. In either case, excessive focus on the presidency seems to distract from the truth.

Understanding Money as Power

There was a popular narrative during the electoral cycle that brought Trump to power. The story went that since Trump was a billionaire, he could fund his own campaign. This meant that he, unlike other candidates, would not be beholden to the usual electoral financiers, and would be able to make real changes to the system.

Unfortunately, this misses the reality that the nation is controlled by capital in many more powerful ways than presidential campaign financing. To understand how the nation is manipulated by capital, it helps to look at how an individual is manipulated by capital.

As an employee, the demands of the company you work for dictate what you work on and what you don't. If you don't do what is expected of you, you don't get paid. Even if you are a self-employed small business owner, in order to compete with larger companies you need capital to buy equipment, expand production, and advertise.

If a small business owner does not seek financing, they will likely be unable to compete with those that do. And financial institutions define the qualifications necessary to secure financing.

The situation is not so different for a country. Nearly every country in the world is financed by debt, and most are dependent on keeping credit lines open in order to remain competitive with other countries.

The United States has been running an overall trade deficit for over 30 years – in other words, sinking deeper into debt. The continuing creditworthiness of the US, along with the value of the US dollar, treasury bonds, and real estate, is dependent on the perception that the US can continue to generate revenue in the form of taxes.

Government debt is not the only issue, but also private debt. Keeping Americans happy depends on an ever intensifying consumer culture. Whether fine dining, cars, houses, vehicles, television, or even intellectual stimulation like university or travel, the system cannot hold together without debt driven gratification to feed the inner spiritual void.

Even for those that do not finance their consumption with debt, they are

likely dependent on some corporation that is financed with debt. And the conditions of access to all of this financing are defined by financiers.

The US government doesn't actually have much money. All they have is assets and power to levy taxes. US foreign currency reserves and gold reserves combined would be enough to run the country for about 11 days. Interest payments on US debts amount to 10% of the national budget, and these payments do not reduce the principle.

These payments are not negotiable, and any budget shortfall has to be made up by cutting funding somewhere else, because to renege on these payments would be to default, which would mean an instant, massive credit downgrade of the United States, and worldwide dumping of treasury bonds, and a collapse in the value of the dollar. This would send the global economy into free-fall, since it is presently based on the dominance of the dollar.

Most global players are aware that this is going to happen eventually, and are all getting poised for when it does. China is hoarding gold and oil and expanding the global role of their currency to prepare to take up the slack of a collapse of the dollar. They are also allowing the wealthy Chinese to move money more freely into America to prop up the American economy, and at the same time moving real assets from American to Chinese hands.

It is a multitude of factors, rather than a small sinister group of individuals, but the fact remains that no individual or presidential administration can change these trends. The flows of weapons must continue to the Arab monarchies, rampant consumption of Chinese products must continue.

The depletion of American topsoil and aquifers must also be maintained in order to maintain food exports and keep third world countries weak and dependent. If any President tried to change these processes, it would not be necessary to assassinate them. The consequences would be so severe that they would likely be torn apart by mobs.

All of this can be demonstrated with publicly available information, so there is no need to speculate on secret societies pulling on puppet strings (although such societies certainly do exist, but it is unclear how much power they actually have).

However, we can point to an outside influence by Jewish financiers, and it does seem odd that no single president has ever challenged US support for

Israel. Many believe that the chairmans of the Federal Reserve are more powerful than US presidents, and the job has been held exclusively by Jews for decades.

Hedge funds are large enough to engage in market manipulation, and many of these funds are managed by Jews, and count Jews as their major contributors. Every US President, from either party, also seems to go through a ritual of wearing a yarmulke and making prayers at the wailing wall.

The single largest donor to the Trump campaign is Renaissance Technologies, founded and owned by a Jewish hedge fund manager and mathematician Jim Simons. It's not like that money comes with no strings attached.

Even if there was a President who was not under the thumb of donors to his campaign, the rest of the political establishment does not have that luxury, and the President is unable to remove such figures.

Aside from direct campaign financing, politicians are largely elected because they provide jobs to their constituencies. If they behave in a way that corporations dislike, those corporations can pack up and take their jobs to other electorates with more friendly politicians.

This ultimately has a powerful effect on legislation as well, and ultimately the norms and regulations of the society are shaped by the demands of capital. In other words, money becomes the supreme authority.

The consequences of this are very severe, and many horror stories from the wars for profit and the prisons for profit attest to this reality. This is bad enough, without considering the future consequences of the environmental devastation brought about by this system.

Considering the level of harm this system causes, the punishment of death for participation in a democratic system is not at all unreasonable. Participation could mean either running for office or voting, because these actions legitimize the system and lend it strength, and its power is nothing more than the energy that its participants give it.

This would not apply, of course, to systems of voting in which the boundaries of divine law, the sharia, are observed. But in the presence of

sharia, the status of money would always be lower than the status of Allah.

Market forces are the most effective means of allocating resources, but they must be governed by inviolable principles. If these sacred boundaries are not respected, it opens the door for unlimited corruption and depravity. Foremost among these sacred boundaries is the prohibition of interest (usury).

Interest is the means by which the elite that currently rule ascended to power, and why the militaries of the world come crashing down with such violence on any that would curtail the prevalence of interest.

So this is an introduction of how money dominates politics. One of the major roles of politics has become distracting people from the reality of the power of money.

Democracy as a Tool for Pacification

If you look at American electoral politics, and the oscillation between Obama and Trump, you can see how elections protect the true ruling classes by pacifying possible dissidents. The two groups who are most likely to organize a rebellion against the American order are urban blacks and rural whites.

Trump appeals to well armed, rural whites with immigration bands, and policies that benefit rural communities, while Obama appealed to urban blacks and enacted policies that benefited them. But deep down, these policies are largely superficial, and do not affect the overall structures of the system.

The phrase “weapons of mass distraction” comes to mind.

The Lie of Religious Tolerance

Freedom of religion sounds great on the surface. Everyone respects everyone else to believe what they want and to worship (or not worship) as they see fit. No violence, no conflict. So the story goes.

This was meant to be an antidote to the religious conflict that tore Europe apart during the Reformation. Unfortunately, it was a failure, because the conflicts between competing secular ideologies like democracy, communism, and fascism have actually been the most violent in history (both in total numbers and per capita).

But there's more to the problem with freedom of religion than just violence.

Turkey has seen a number of cults in recent years where religious leaders used their authority to sexually abuse many of their followers. There are hundreds of stories like this in America, so hearing such a story in America is nothing surprising. When I heard about similar stories in Turkey, however, I was shocked. I'd never heard such things from a Muslim majority country.

I began to research the reason for this, and it became clear very quickly what was happening. After World War 1, Turkey's government was dismantled and replaced with a secular regime modeled after European and American liberal norms. And so it became clear that it is the freedom of religion of secularism itself that allows sects like these to form.

This lays bare the fallacy of religious freedom. One of the essential purposes of religion is to provide moral guidance. In fact, if a system of beliefs does not contain prescriptions about right and wrong, it cannot truly be called a religion.

In Islam, and in most traditional religions, the power to define right and wrong rests with God. Learned individuals are entrusted with helping us interpret and learn this law, and if those individuals abuse their power to sexually exploit their followers, it is seen as a sign of corruption.

Giving the power of legislation completely to human beings means that moral absolutes cease to exist. Absolute freedom of religion gives an open field for anyone to define their own system of morality, even if that system of

morality gives them the right to use dozens of children sexually. If you do a brief internet search for the stories of people who survived cults as children, it's clear that there is no shortage of victims.

If we look at the traditional role of religions, it is clear that the definition of morality is indeed one of the defining characteristics of a religion. So in reality, freedom of religion is not true freedom of religion. Rather, it strips all religions of their absolute moral authority, and replaces that authority with the authority of the state.

It's no wonder that Nietzsche proclaimed the death of God. With the rise of secularism, God did indeed cease to be the main organizing principle of European society.

This lays bare a couple of facts. One is that what we today call religions are simply relics. The comparison of modern Christianity is to Christianity as a photograph of a deceased relative is to the living, breathing relative. It's simply a memory of what once was.

It also reveals that the claim of religious "tolerance" by secularism is completely empty. There is freedom of religion only as long as you bow before the authority of the high council of elected officials. If you challenge that power structure, you will be punished severely, just as was the case with heretics under medieval Christianity.

Explaining the Uniqueness of Jews

The cultural cohesion of the Jewish people is a remarkable thing, and I've never really seen anything like it anywhere else- every other people that has been scattered and divided in different locations has assimilated and adapted to their new surroundings, and blended with the local population.

A lot of the modern success of the Jewish people can be attributed to their identity. By sensing that they are part of a multi-generational continuum, they are able to ride out business cycles and periods of difficulty better than most other people, who become fixated on short term gains or losses.

The strength of this identity is a unique advantage. What is also remarkable is that no one has really been able to imitate it. What is the basis of this identity, and why is it so hard to replicate?

In considering this question, I reached the conclusion that the easiest way to explain the power of the Jewish people is to recognize that the events described in the Torah are not entirely fictitious.

I stayed at a new age commune for a while years back. The people there had copied a bunch of rituals from north American pre-European colonization tribes, including sweat lodges and vision quests.

The vision quest is a pretty intense ceremony- it involves not eating or drinking for days at a time. I noticed clearly that there was a difference between the members of the commune that had undertaken the vision quest and those that hadn't- there was a clear bond between those that had been through this ritual.

This helped to drive home the purpose of the intense initiation ceremonies I'd heard about from Africa. In Africa, where tribal identity is much stronger than in many places, initiation into the tribe is often regulated by means of a highly ritualized ceremony that often involves enduring a lot of pain, especially for boys.

This does promote mental toughness, but more importantly it sets a barrier to entry into the group. One of the major determinants of the value of membership in a group is the difficulty of entering into the group; value is governed by the laws of scarcity, where more scarce = higher value. So

membership in a group that is more difficult to join would carry higher value than one that is easier to join. And intense experiences create a bond between those that undergo them.

The events described in the Torah describe incredibly intense and sometimes very difficult experiences. These descriptions also often include events that clearly demonstrated divine favor upon the tribe of Israel.

There are obviously some things about Jewish history that are clearly not accurate. For example, Ibn Khaldun questioned the veracity of the claim that Moses' army contained 600,000 men on the basis that the land they came from could not realistically support that many men, given the agricultural practices and trade networks that existed at the time.

Nonetheless, I believe that the only reasonable explanation for the powerful bond that has held the Jewish people together for thousands of years can only be explained by the shared history of truly miraculous experiences like those described in the Torah. In fact, this bond is evidence of the power of the events that the Jews lived through.

Imagine seeing events like the plagues that afflicted Egypt, the parting of the Red sea, the collecting of manna in the wilderness, a cloud like golden light descending on the tabernacle, miraculous victory when heavily outnumbered, a small quantity of oil lasting for 8 days, and so on. These events would leave a deep impression on anyone who experienced them. It would certainly be the kind of story you would pass on to your children. And these stories are bound up with a tribal identity, not individual identity. Even if it were not passed on directly to the children, it would still be the sort of thing that would change you forever. It would change your beliefs, your thoughts, and your manners, which in turn would affect the way you raise your children. And this would be passed from generation, to generation, to generation.

Some people today have religious experiences or witness miracles that completely change them. And while these events are amazing, most are still quite minor compared to the events documented in the Torah.

So given the unique qualities of the Jewish people, and their anomalous nature in the history of the world, I can only conclude that the most plausible explanation for the unique qualities of the Jewish people is that some of the events described in the Torah are true.

The same goes for any other religion. Thinking along these lines, it would seem that the power of any religion is directly related to the events surrounding the religion's inception, and the effect of these events on those who witnessed them.

Many skeptics dismiss beliefs based on the fact that religions have been used by oppressors. But there is no question in my mind that it is possible to abuse the truth, and try to twist it for your own personal benefit. This does not invalidate the truth. This is one of the main fallacies of Marxism, which, incidentally is very much inspired by Judaism.

Another argument brought by those who dismiss the events described in the Torah is the scientific world view. I don't understand how the rise of empiricism would lead people to discount these events entirely. Humanity is continuously encountering phenomena that we are not able to explain. Debate about the nature of reality is ongoing, and the incidence of unexplained spiritual phenomena seems to be too widespread to discount entirely.

There is a real cognitive bias in scientific research. When selecting data, it is easy to unconsciously design research to support a certain model of reality in which we are personally invested. When the data then confirm our conclusions, it can lead us to feel more certain that our particular set of beliefs is absolutely true, when in reality, other data might throw them into question.

This is understandable, because like in everything, humans compete for status. Having superior understanding or more knowledge is like having a bigger house, a better position or job, or any status symbol. Only those who are secure in their sense of self worth can admit their weakness or lack of understanding.

Sun Worship in Christianity and Issues with Paganism

When Christianity emerged as the official religion of the Roman empire, many elements of pagan belief were integrated into Christian ritual. For example, in many cultures, the solstice was believed to symbolize the death and rebirth of the sun god. To replace this celebration with a celebration of Jesus' birth is a natural replacement, since the Biblical narrative also contains a story of resurrection.

In many cultures variations on the cross were used as symbols for the sun, including in the Aryan Hindu and Buddhist tradition, where swastikas, the hooked cross, can be found on many temples. In medieval European alchemy, a cross inside a circle was a symbol for the sun.

In ancient Egypt, the obelisk was considered to be a crystallization of Ra, the sun god. Obelisks were placed in ceremonially significant locations in Rome, and one Egyptian obelisk built by Ramses II was transported to Rome. That obelisk now sits in the plaza in front of the Vatican, and all the statues of the saints face it in salute.

Even in Washington DC, the capital of the United States, an obelisk has been given an important and honored ceremonial position on the national mall, and is capped with a solid aluminum pyramid at the top.

The Crucifix is often depicted with rays of light radiating out of it, as if the cult of Christianity is an attempt of fire and sun worship to survive the challenges presented. The story of the resurrection matches many stories in various mythologies where deities die, enter the underworld, and rise again after three days.

All of these pagan mythologies seem to branch off into various cults, and they seem to die out with their civilizations. And yet, somehow, these traditions have survived in various guises.

One of the problems with these pagan religions and their focus on the sun, moon, and other celestial bodies as objects of worship, is that these objects of worship appear in different ways in different parts of the world. Thus, religions that are based on significant celestial events that are visible in the northern hemisphere or temperate regions naturally exclude those living near the equator.

Solstice rituals, like Christmas, and Equinox rituals, like Easter, are out of place on the equator, because they have specific functions related to agriculture in Europe. Solstice feasts involve slaughtering animals to save fodder for winter, and the spring fast of Lent takes place at the end of winter, when food reserves are exhausted.

It is possible to have gatherings of winter cheer without reference to established rituals that link us to pagan symbols of Pharaonic Egypt or the Aryan conquerors of India. It is worth trying to disavow these traditions, along with their cruelty and injustice.

Deception by Externalization

Both temporal and spatial boundaries are necessary to manufacture moral illusions. For example, the United States can claim to be superior to Russia or China in terms of human rights only by limiting the analysis of actions undertaken by the United States. This means limiting how we understand actions both in terms of time and space.

For example, deception can be achieved by focusing on conditions inside the US, while ignoring the relationship of those conditions to conditions outside the US. Also, it is possible to look only at the present, without considering events in the past that made the present possible, and future effects that present circumstances may have.

Only by overlooking all of this, and then heaping on a generous helping of positive thinking and optimism (read: selective vision) can the rosy picture that many hold in their minds be upheld.

This is similar to a tower that must be built higher in order to stay standing, and yet, as it grows higher, it becomes more and more unstable. This is the nature of all falsehood.

This is not pessimism. This is a call to an emotionally, economically, environmentally, socially and morally sustainable life. If you choose to do what is right, you will be labeled as an enemy of the powers that be.

It is essential to believe that there is no escape from our actions. We cannot simply enjoy our lives while doing what is wrong, thinking that if the proverbial shit hits the fan after we die that it is "not our problem." We will face a reckoning for everything we did, and death will offer no refuge from the fruit of our deeds. Death is simply the manifestation of the reality of our actions.

What if Everyone Were Treated Fairly?

Imagine you were to analyze the total sum of all industrial inputs and calculate what the production of a piece of machinery would cost if everyone in its production supply chain received the minimum wage and labor safety of a highly industrialized nation. The cost of labor would raise the price of all of the materials going into a factory, which would dramatically increase the cost of the final product.

I suspect that if you were able to make these calculations, that the balance which makes mechanization economically viable would be tipped.

For example, consider a washing machine.

The biggest inputs are likely iron, aluminum, copper, and plastics.

Australia is a major producer of bauxite and iron, but mining there is highly mechanized, which means you would adjust the cost of the machinery they use for mining, which in turn would adjust the price of the ore they produce.

In Brazil, however, mining relies much more on human labor and work conditions are generally more hard on the health and safety of workers, which lowers the production costs. In China, another top producer of aluminum, this is more so.

So let's suppose the laborers working in mines in places like China and Brazil were paid \$15 an hour, and given health coverage and workplace safety standards like those in America or Europe. This change would affect the cost of all machinery, and all machinery that is produced using machinery.

This would multiply expenses, since machinery used in mineral extraction is produced using still other machinery in industrial processes, and this would have to be factored in at every step of the process. It would also dramatically increase the cost of transport by cargo ship, truck, and plane.

Furthermore, industrial production and mining often disrupts indigenous people and traditional livelihoods by displacement as well as environmental contamination. Presuming these people are adequately compensated for their loss (as they usually aren't in Asia, Africa and South America) this

would drive up costs even more.

The result would be vastly more expensive raw materials, and a washing machine that costs now in the low hundreds could easily run into the thousands or tens of thousands.

This price would be driven even higher if you accounted for past exploitation and paid reparations to those who were wronged in the process of building the modern, industrial world economy, such as the descendants of slaves and native Americans.

This would also make the cost of electricity and water infrastructure much more expensive, so you would have to factor the cost of building running water and electricity into a house at the new prices.

This would also dramatically increase the price of electricity and running water, because the infrastructure associated with utilities is also heavily dependent on mechanized production processes.

Most washing machines can handle 4000-8000 cycles in their lifetime, lasting around 14 years. Having washed clothes by hand, I can say that doing an average load of laundry by hand can be done in under an hour. So let's say a high end washer saves about 8000 hours of labor, or at \$15 an hour (but should clothes washers really be paid the same as miners?) \$120,000.

We have to consider, however, that given our theoretical world of worldwide fair labor practices and wages, the vastly more expensive machinery and higher labor costs means clothes have gotten way more expensive too. Washing machines tend to wear clothes out more quickly, amounting to another major cost. Even though this may only amount to pennies per cycle, over the 8000 cycle lifetime it would really add up.

In addition, we have to consider that the reason washing machines are so cheap is partly because they are mass produced. If prices for washing machines increased, there would accordingly be fewer people who could afford them, and this decreased demand would drive prices up even further.

It would be nearly impossible to actually assess the cost- you also have to consider the maintenance budgets of electrical grids, power plants, water and sewer infrastructure. Suffice to say, it would seriously shift the balance, and I suspect quite possibly render the washing machine obsolete. At least it would

certainly change the way we use washing machines profoundly.

This all may seem crazy and outlandish, but all of this simply comes from asking the question:

"What if everyone were treated fairly?"

It's strange that this question seems so strange.

What Would You Do?

Imagine you discovered that there's some kind of spiritual reality beyond the secular scientific worldview. Then suppose you realize that your own culture's alienation from this spiritual reality is causing huge amounts of suffering for untold millions upon millions of people, including for your own family and self.

Then suppose you traveled to other countries and encountered cultures that do not have the alienation from spiritual reality you observed in your family. You see they live in awareness and reverence of this spiritual reality. You then realize that the emotional and psychological trauma and cruelty that you and your family suffered growing up are not normal; rather, the situation is especially bad in your culture.

In encountering these other cultures, you realize there is a way out, both from the damage that you suffered growing up, and also from the self destructive path that your entire society is on. But when you try to tell your people about it, you get shut down, silenced, reviled, ignored, snubbed, insulted, and rejected.

In a situation like this it would take a great deal of compassion to not hate the people rejecting you and your sincere wishes for their well being.

Imagine then that you realize there is a higher moral law, and in studying it you come into contact with a community that spans every race and tribe on the earth. In this community you find love, acceptance, kindness, and humility in contrast to the state of constant abuse and callousness that characterizes your own people. Meanwhile, you watch your own people sink deep into vicious cycles of drug and media addiction among your loved ones as a result of the callousness in their hearts.

Then imagine you learn that your own people are engaged in the systematic destruction of your the community in which you saw such compassion, mercy, and kindness. They are killing the members of this community and seeking to destroy their entire culture. And the reason they are doing this is in order to seize wealth so that they can continue the way of life that you are watching destroy them. The way of life that deepens their alienation from the spiritual reality.

What do you do? If you try to speak out, to warn them, to ask them to stop, to reason with them, your voice is drowned out as your people seek more money and entertainment. This entertainment presents an alternate reality so compelling, that like an opiate, people much prefer it to what you are inviting them to, since what you are inviting them to would require major changes and sacrifices. Would you feel anger, pity? Would you throw yourself in front of a bulldozer or tank to slow the expansion of this way of life for a moment?

Would you sacrifice yourself to enable some people from your new community to survive or escape from being run over to feed the insatiable appetite that the spiritual void of your own culture generates?

Would you stand by and idly watch as the community that accepted you as your own people never did is ground into pieces and destroyed, and slowly becomes, under the weight of terror, killing, and harassment, as callous and materialistic as your own culture?

To join in on the destruction would mean you could make a lot of money. But what if you were not able to delude yourself into believing that what you were doing was good as others seem to be able to convince themselves? What if even drugs and entertainment failed to numb your feeling that participating in the society into which you were born is morally wrong?

What would you do?

Letter from a Divorce

The following is a correspondence between myself and the father of my ex-wife.

She had been my girlfriend in high school, and we separated when I was in my early twenties. Before separating, I had promised her if she did not marry by the time she was 30, and I was still unmarried, that I would marry her.

In the time in between, I started to practice Islam. I saw her for the first time after 5 years at my father's burial, and we agreed to marry. The imam at the masjid agreed to perform the marriage on the condition that she become Muslim, so she pronounced the shahada (Islamic testimony of faith). She began praying the 5 daily prayers, but she did not want to accompany me to Egypt to support me in studying, or leave her job.

I went to Egypt without her, and we began to grow apart. I told her of my intention to marry another wife, to which she reacted very violently.

Before I actually did marry, she told me that she rejected the doctrine of predestination (qadr), which itself is an action by which a person rejects Islam. I was confused as to whether this nullifies the marriage, but soon after she also abandoned the daily prayers.

I continued to try to convince her to change her mind, and to preserve the marriage, but she insisted that she had the power of divorce, and seemed to think the fact that the power of divorce rests with the man in Islam was oppressive.

This situation illustrated many of the fundamental issues of conflict between Western and Islamic civilization. Ultimately, she was unwilling to accept me as the leader of our family, and she was not interested in making sacrifices for the sake of Islam. The belief in a reward in the hereafter was missing, so to miss out on any pleasures of life for the sake of Allah seemed a waste to her.

Following is a correspondence with her father that took place after our divorce. I sought his help to convince her to return to Islam and marry me again. I thought, perhaps naively, that there was some possibility that she could pursue her life in America, and I could pursue my studies of Islam in

Egypt, while maintaining our marriage in spite of my having a wife in Egypt.

In the letters, I addressed what I saw to be fundamental theological problems in the religious doctrines that he had taught her as a child, which I believed had contributed to our conflict and eventual divorce.

My hope was that if her father was willing to reconsider his theological position, that perhaps he could acknowledge some of the problematic issues of his family's belief system. I saw materialism as being at the root of our relationship unraveling, so I sought to address the root of materialism that I had witnessed in their family.

The father of my ex-wife was a reader of the Urantia Book, a new age version of the Christian bible. In these letters I addressed some points explicitly mentioned by the Urantia book, as well as some deeper points of Christian and pagan theology in modern American beliefs and values.

He did acknowledge the validity of some of my points, but as far as I know, he never tried to communicate with his daughter about it as I requested.

The names here have been removed.

Dear S.,

If I could truly envision what the acceptance of God was like, there would be no need for faith and probably no need for this life at all.

I am just as concerned about my kids' well being as anyone, but I believe in the primacy of spiritual well being. It may seem shocking, but I would rather my child have a severe fever and permanent brain damage than grow up to be a Christian.

In Russian, the word for a mentally handicapped person means literally "one who is under God." Muslims believe that the sins of a mentally handicapped person are forgiven. The prospect of my daughter entering hell is far more serious to me than her being permanently handicapped.

I believe that Jesus and Mohammed (صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) were truthful when they spoke about a reality of an eternal life. And both alluded to the reality of hellfire. So, try to understand, as you are concerned about the possibility of a home invasion threatening your family, I am concerned about the possibility of my family entering hell.

In an earlier conversation, I quoted to you a hadith from the Prophet Mohammed ﷺ where he compared the life of this world to a needle that is dipped in the ocean. That is, if you were to dip a needle in the ocean, when you pulled it out of the water, it would be wet. The water on the needle, compared to the water in the ocean, is like the comparison between the life of this world and the life after death.

So consider how much care you put into the material well being and safety of your family. You take care to check that the doors are locked at night. You spend much of your time working to provide for your family. And in reality, the amount of effort you expend in caring for them in this life, in comparison to the amount of effort you put into protecting them in the next life, should be proportional to the relative importance of the life of this world and the life after death.

I'm not saying that I have reached the level of faith where I actually implement this. But this is the goal we should strive towards. We should strive to cultivate awareness of the reality of this life, and bring our actions into alignment with this awareness.

I think it is clear to see that we overemphasize the material aspect of our

lives and underemphasize that spiritual aspect. I suppose, though, if you reject the idea of hell, as you seem to, it might not really matter.

You seem to have an idea that fear is something bad, and that true spiritual enlightenment is incompatible with fear. And yet, the Bible records that Solomon (عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ) said “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.”

I can't claim to be wise, but as I get older the wisdom of my elders seems to become more apparent. For example, I always used to notice my grandparents taking care to clean tools after working. But I didn't truly understand this until I had tools destroyed by rust after not cleaning them properly after working.

And so, the older I get, the more afraid I become of leaving my tools dirty after work. The process of rust is part of nature and God's law, so, in a way, understanding the wisdom of my grandparents results from the fear of the Lord.

This is a small, concrete example, but it is meant to illustrate the fact that fearing God is not necessarily a bad thing. If we refuse to accept the possibility of negative consequences for our spiritual life after death, it can easily lead us away from the path of wisdom. So I am writing to ask for your help in protecting my daughter and your granddaughter from danger and harm in the life to come.

Your daughter was engaged in a number of things that I cannot support, and the nature of our society meant that I had no means to prevent her from those things. To stay in a relationship with her under these circumstances would mean supporting her in many actions which are destructive to herself, myself, and our daughter. This is true not only in a material sense, but it also means my having to share in the harvest of what she is sowing on the Day of Reckoning.

I could not command her, and nor would she obey me, because we live in a society where gender roles are defined by the demands of a post-modern economic order. Circumstances have allowed me to spend much of my time studying and reflecting on social phenomena, and I have come to the conclusion that this power balance does not represent a higher phase of evolution, as you believe.

Rather, it appears to me that we are living in the upper echelon of an

unsustainable global hierarchy. This world order is seeking to invert the natural order and the perfection of God's creation, and seeking to divert people from worshiping Him as the Prophets, including Jesus (عليه السلام), did.

I cannot ask for perfection, and certainly cannot offer it. All I am asking is for sincerity and intention. I have tried hundreds of times in hundreds of different ways to explain how the American way of life is inconsistent with Christian values. I've made many suggestions on how to make concrete steps to move closer into alignment with those values. And every time, I am accused of preaching or being arrogant, and ignored.

I almost believed that there was something wrong with what I was doing, but here in Egypt many people listen to me. Several people have also commented that they think I am humble. And so I am beginning to question if there is really something wrong with me.

Perhaps it was the message that I was calling to, and not me, that the people were rejecting.

I am simply taking steps in my life to try to understand and move gradually in a direction that is more in line with what I sincerely believe to be the teaching of both Jesus and Mohammed (صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) and all of the prophets. I won't try to pretend like I am doing a good job of it, but I am trying. And your daughter is not.

She is living fully in accordance with the norms of American society. While some of those values are truly Christian values, many are not. And she refuses to change her lifestyle to accommodate authentic Christian or Islamic values, because she does not want to come into conflict with society.

I am appealing to you because you had a role in shaping your daughter's core values. You've done a great job in raising her, and I have learned much from you. I continue to learn from our contact with one another, and I believe I may still learn much more from you, if God wills.

But I have come to believe that some of the precepts of the worldview which you taught her are false. It is the desire of every good parent to teach their children in the best possible way to teach them about morality and how to live a good and righteous life. But it goes without saying that none of us, no matter how hard we try, is going to be able to succeed perfectly in that goal.

I hope that you will welcome my advice, just as I would welcome criticism of my own beliefs, if it is offered out of sincere concern for my well being and that of my family.

And perhaps that is why I have failed so far to convince you of my views. I feel I may have spoken with you at times out of a desire to be right, rather than speaking with sincere compassion for your well being. And I hope that I can correct these mistakes going forward.

I do not agree with many points in your response, but I find it to be very fruitful nonetheless. By virtue of your upbringing, you have a connection to the living tradition of Jesus' legacy and the textual tradition of Christianity. The Bible has been corrupted, but it still contains many elements of divine revelation.

It is an article of faith for a Muslim to believe in this revelation, so it is natural that hearing your perspective would bring me closer to the Truth.

Regarding your point about polygyny, there is no question that God has allowed it, and the Bible supports this conclusion. It is your daughter's right to choose not to be in such a relationship. However, my second marriage resulted from problems that began in our relationship much earlier, which resulted in your daughter and myself being separated for long periods of time.

Your daughter never truly shared my values, and she did not want to accompany me on the path that I am on. I chose to continue on the path I was upon, and I repeatedly pleaded with her to join me, until the distance finally became too great.

After a series of visions in Colombia, I prayed to God that he teach me His law. One of the first pieces of knowledge that came to me was that the husband has authority over his wife. And this is the law for the age we live in, for the entire earth.

I firmly believe that a family needs a leader, and the Bible confirms in Ephesians 5:23 that the man is the head of the family.

And I have come to understand that this is true. The kind of feminism that has become popular in Europe and America necessitates a material standard of living that the earth cannot support. The wealth of America is built on the blood of millions of innocent people, and there is no way that everyone on

the earth can live in this way.

In my study of God's law (the sharia), I have noticed that if you examine any single precept closely, you will find layer after layer of wisdom, until your mind becomes exhausted. It is almost as if to study God's law is a window by which the mind's eye can gaze upon God Himself.

But once you acquire this knowledge, you are obligated to act. If you implement this knowledge, it becomes a source of blessings, and if you hoard it without applying it, it is a severe curse.

Polygyny and the Idea of Linear Evolution

Monogamy is a cultural hallmark of Greco-Roman civilization, such that the Greeks considered it as one of the core parts of their identity which differentiated them from other peoples of antiquity. The Greeks were also notable for an attitude of arrogance towards other peoples, referring to all non-Greeks as “barbarians.”

The word “barbarian” was derived from mocking the manner of speaking of non-Greeks—“*bar bar bar*.” Greek culture is at the intellectual and cultural root of American culture.

In reading the Urantia book, I found traces of this same attitude of arrogance. It contains an idea which was in wide circulation around the time it was written, but which has more recently fallen out of favor with anthropologists and sociologists. The idea I am referring to is the notion of a linear progression of cultural evolution.

In this schema, “primitive” cultures, or savages, evolve to become “barbarians,” and then finally arrive at the level of “civilization.” This idea would suggest that traditional cultures are immature, and need to follow the same trajectory of development as European cultures.

In reality, we have realized that many traditional cultures are able to do some things much better than complex civilizations; for example, caring for mental health, or the health of the natural environment. The truth is that different cultures have different trajectories of development, and having more wealth or technology is not necessarily a measure of success or superiority.

That is not to say that there is no wisdom in the Book of Urantia; indeed, there is very much wisdom in it. But this has been the problem with Christianity from very early in its history. The truth has been mixed with falsehood. Perhaps this happened through good intentions, or with bad intentions, or with both. And this has caused much confusion and division.

I have no enmity towards monogamy, although I have met many monogamists who show hostility towards polygyny. The Prophet Muhammed ﷺ was monogamous for many years. So were many of his companions, and many saints and scholars of Islam.

In my reading, the Urantia book comes across as a well intentioned rewrite of the New Testament by an individual or group that was seriously trying to hold onto their faith in light of modern developments. I can't say if it is the work of a conscious mind, or a powerful unconscious personality with links to the collective consciousness.

I cannot discount, however, the possibility that it could be an attempt by some kind of demonic entity to lead people astray. It integrates scientific theory that was in vogue at the time of its writing with Biblical teachings, at a time in which those same scientific doctrines were challenging people's faith in the Bible.

There is no doubt in my mind that a large portion of the scientific establishment is demonically inspired, with the goal of supplanting religion with reverence for the human intellect. While scientific doctrines are no doubt useful, their *supremacy* is extremely dangerous.

But let's focus on the Urantia Book's handling of polygyny. It asserts that "a higher degree of refinement of moral character is possible in monogamy." It also claims that this higher degree of moral refinement is impossible in polygyny.

This in itself is an insult to many prophets, including Muhammed, Solomon, David, and others, عَلَيْهِمُ السَّلَامُ. Although Jesus was not polygynous, he respected and exalted the law of Torah, and polygyny was an established part of Judaism during Jesus' ministry. So, by extension, an insult to polygyny is also an insult to Jesus, عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ, and the law which he fulfilled.

Do you think that the Prophet Abraham, عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ, ordered his wives around like cows and did not treat them with dignity or respect? Rather, he

entered into a polygynous relationship at the behest of his wife, Sarah.

Reading the Urantia book, it is quite clear that the author of the Urantia book, human or not, either considers societies where polygyny is common as inferior or wants to portray them as lower on a conceptual evolutionary ladder. For example, the author writes: "Monogamy is the yardstick for measuring the advance of social civilization."

The Urantia book also makes the claim that monogamy is best for the children, which I find absurd. It is absolutely true to say that it can be better for the children, but to state this as a universal, with no qualification simply reflects privileging of a certain cultural perspective.

Monogamy may be superior in the context of American society, where social, cultural, and economic institutions are uniquely adapted to monogamous families. But on the whole, I do not view the influence of American society on the world as a net positive, and this view is derived primarily from concerns about justice and ecology on a global level. As such, I strongly believe that American institutions, including modern conceptions of the family, are in desperate need of reform.

If you visit Muslim societies where polygyny is widely practised, you will find that families in general are much stronger, and that the mental health of the people living there is often far more sound than in predominantly monogamous societies like the US or Europe. This is not to say that there is a causal link between polygyny and mental health, but the correlation is striking.

I believe that the Prophets were the best of humanity, so I do not believe that our modern (very unsustainable) society truly represents a higher phase of evolution or a superior way of living. Our modern way of life has dwarfed the scale of violence that characterized most pre-modern warfare. It's also built upon a racial hierarchy which initially required relegating millions of dark skinned human beings to subhuman status. We still feel the repercussions of this racial oppression today.

In brief, this "evolution" and "civilization," appears to be little more than a refinement of cruelty accompanied by more sophisticated mechanisms of hiding the crimes from view. Having traveled and seen the inequality and injustice of the world order, and then studying history and learning how this system was built, it is very hard for me to swallow narratives that this

civilization represents advancement or the enlightenment of humanity.

There is also abundant evidence that suggests our current phase of civilization is entering a period of decline, and this has been the case with all civilizations of the past when reserves of energy (lumber, productive topsoil, etc.) were exhausted.

And so a world order that strongly normalizes monogamy and prohibit polygyny, while making illegitimate sexual relationships legal does not seem like progress.

In modern society, the state fills many functions which traditionally belonged to the extended family, including provision of social welfare and security. But the state does not fill the emotional gap left by the loss of the extended family, which means that the nuclear family has to carry a greater emotional burden than it does in a more traditional or tribal society. This pressure contributes to the psychological strain which results in higher rates of divorce in “developed” countries.

The Urantia book also makes some very flimsy and offensive claims, such as the suggestion that a woman in a polygynous marriage can “never become an ideal mother” due to needing to compete with other women for her husband’s affection.

First, the definition of an “ideal mother” could vary widely depending on context. Secondly, depending on the needs of her husband and the extent of the structure of household production, polygyny may allow a woman more time to focus on mothering. Thirdly, she is able to restrain her jealousy just as a man is able to restrain himself in order to treat his wives fairly. Fourthly, competition can also increase overall performance, which is the case in many fields.

Aside from all that, do you think that women married to men who work in offices with numerous female colleagues do not have to compete for their husband’s affection?

When considering these issues, it’s also important to ask ourselves who benefits from a certain state of affairs.

For whatever reason, the present rulers of the world are pushing population control very aggressively, and curbing polygyny supports that goal. This is evidenced by the fact that the societies where polygyny is most common have

the highest fertility rates in the world. Consider how much more acceptable adulterous relationships are in American society than polygynous marriages. Who benefits from this system of values?

Ownership of production is much easier to concentrate in fewer hands with mechanization, as opposed to manual labor. With high fertility and low material standard of living, fewer labor processes are mechanized, which results in higher employment and better psychological health, but less reliance on centralized, capital intensive, industrial processes.

So curbing polygyny allows accelerating the concentration and centralization of political and economic power in the hands of a small elite that currently governs the world. And all signs point to the conclusion that this elite is pushing the world towards severe military conflict and ecological fallout.

The Urantia book seeks to connect technological development with spiritual progression, which is very misleading. It casts human ingenuity as a kind of savior and promotes the notion of a millenarian era of peace, which is very questionable even in light of Biblical teachings.

This thinking is very attractive, but it falls into the same trap as the proponents of the rapture. While the rapture provides believers that it is possible to escape death, the Urantia Book describes an escape from collective death. It proposes a model of time and the universe that denies the reality of the ultimate death of the totality of all creation, also known as “the Day of Judgment.”

It is understandable why someone would *want* to believe this. It is reminiscent of the emphasis on total positivity that characterizes the entire new age movement. This runs contrary to Islamic creed and other essential teachings of the Bible, however, which stress the impermanence and transience of all material things.

My own logic and observation also rails against such theology, because in years of observing the New Age movement, I have not seen it do anything to address class warfare and the systematic and growing social and economic imbalances which cause untold suffering for so many. This is partly because I view this systematic oppression not only from the national perspective, but on the global level.

A Solution for All Humanity, the Nearness of God, and Fire-Worship

I simply don't see the Urantia Book as being able to bridge the social fault lines of the world. Even the language of the Urantia book would be totally inaccessible to the vast majority of the people of the earth. By contrast, the Quran may at first seem simplistic, but deep and sincere study shows an inexhaustible fount of incredibly deep meaning. Any intellect, whether a mind formed by the complex educational institutions of the major world powers or an African bush hunter, can derive powerful moral lessons, guidance, and inspiration from it.

This is a miracle of the speech of Allah, that it can speak to anyone, from any background, and profoundly move them. This is consistent with the personality of God as described in the Bible. But unfortunately, the Urantia Book seems to reduce the God of Abraham to Melchizedek, who was undoubtedly a human being.

The trick is to equate Melchizedek with Jesus, and then to affirm Jesus as the son of God. Once God is then likened to Jesus via the trinity, a conception of God is established in which God is far away and not really involved in our everyday lives. I have seen this belief to be at the core of your daughter's beliefs, and she also expressed these ideas to me verbally. Specifically, she stated that she believes that God is not especially concerned with or involved in our everyday lives, but rather created the physical universe and then stepped back to allow things to take their course. This is an extremely wicked and destructive lie.

God is all powerful, and in control of every slight movement that happens around us. No leaf falls from a tree in the forest except by his willing. He can hear our prayers at any moment, and can answer those prayers. To believe that he is somehow remote or inaccessible, is to replace Him with something else.

At the same time, the Urantia Book puts forth the notion that there is a divine "spark" in each person. So while the true God is pushed far away, and His nature denied, we are told at the same time that God is inside us, which makes it very easy to think of ourselves as divine, or at least as possessing some divine nature. In other words, while the idea of the true God is pushed far away, the idea of false gods is brought very near.

This is in keeping with a trend in Christianity of fusion of Christian theological precepts with pagan deities. This began with the well intentioned idea that reflecting on principles of nature could be a means to know the nature of God. But if nature alone were an adequate means to know God, there would be no need for revelation.

A consistent theme in paganism is that natural forces are worshiped alongside or instead of the true God. The Urantia book chooses the word “spark” to describe the “piece of God” contained within a human, and you might notice that a “spark” is a part of fire— a common object of worship in many pagan religions.

The sun, the big fire in the sky, was the greatest God worshiped by the Egyptians. The obelisk was considered a crystallization and earthly manifestation of Ra, the sun. In the center of St. Peter’s square, faced by the statues of all the angels and saints, is an obelisk which was transported from Egypt to Rome in the days of the Roman empire. And an obelisk also sits in an important ceremonial location in Washington D.C., aligned with the center of the American government and various shrines containing statues of deified political figures such as the Lincoln monument, which are modeled after the Roman temples- which in turn were modeled after Greek temples, that were in turn inspired by Egyptian temples.

God teaches us in the Quran that the true original sin was pride, the pride of Satan. The devil regarded himself as superior to Adam because of being created from fire, while Adam was created from earth.

So to put it bluntly, Satan has been trying to seduce human beings into worshiping him rather than the God of Moses, Jesus, Abraham and Mohammed; the Lord of the heavens and the earth, and the Lord of fire. The book of Urantia contains traces of this deception, as do the symbols of American government, such as the Washington monument or the architecture of other national monuments.

Mixing the Divine and the Human, the Devil in Rock and Roll

To imagine God as existing within the human is another issue that is consistent in early Christian theology and the Urantia book. Some early Christian theologians conceived Jesus as being part of the substance of God,

and the concept of a divine “spark,” a piece of God within each human, also guides us to look for God within ourselves.

Once we accept the idea of God as a human being, it is not far off to accept that every human has something of the divinity in them. This plants the seeds for the disintegration of the law, since if God is located in every person, every person also has the right to make legislation.

The collective expression of this, democracy, also states that the collective can decide what is right for others. It could theoretically be possible to illegalize heterosexual marriage and legislate reproduction by cloning, it could legislate the classification of Vietnamese people as subhuman and require torture spectacles of them in public parks.

In other words, everything becomes lawful, which is the equivalent of the first principle of Aleister Crowley’s Law of Thelema “Do what thou wilt shall be the whole of the Law.” This is a decidedly Satanic proposition.

We don’t realize how much these kinds of ideas affect our culture. For example, Robert Plant was an avid reader of Aleister Crowley and collector of his memorabilia, and even bought a mansion of his where many rituals were performed with the intention of composing songs there. Most of the lyrics of the song “Stairway to Heaven” were written in a single sitting in a bizarre flow of inspiration, and when played backward, one segment of the song praises satan and describes a life with satan. Aleister Crowley’s photograph also appears on the cover of Sergeant Pepper’s Lonely Hearts Club Band.

Growing up, I often heard ridicule of fanatic preachers who condemned rock and roll music as being the work of Satan. I thought these preachers must be completely deluded relics, but now it seems unlikely that so many community and spiritual leaders would have proposed such an idea if it was totally ludicrous.

“Freedom,” Spiritual Technology, and the Ideal Environment for Children

The ideology of freedom is ultimately rebellion against God, because limitations on what we can do are built into the natural world. At the core, a religion is a lifestyle, and lifestyles are linked to the availability of finite

natural resources. It appears to me that God's creation (nature) is perfectly wise and balanced, and that the civilization that humans are building up, with the Euro-American cultural tradition in the lead, is diverging further and further from that natural order.

Since we have the revelation of the Bible and Quran, advancing the cause of "freedom" requires somehow discounting either the God of the Bible or the law contained in the Bible, and a fine way to do this is to claim that God's law represents an obsolete phase of a grand evolutionary path.

Rejecting the idea that modern civilization represents a higher or superior phase of evolution does not mean advocating a world without technology, but it means rather a world where technology coexists with justice, and there is such a thing as spiritual technology, although the Western scientific tradition lacks the instrumentation to observe it. Islamic law or sharia is such a spiritual technology, and it exceeds the efficacy and elegance of the modern system by far, and you will find this if you study it deeply.

While this may be distasteful to you, these beliefs are at the core of the conflict between your daughter and myself. It is understandable that you are supportive of her perspective, because it is a reflection of your own beliefs. This is why I am trying to get to the roots of these beliefs, because your role in raising her and building the environment in which she grew was central to making her who she is today, and I believe you still have the power to influence her and her beliefs.

It is my intention to do whatever is in my power to balance my responsibilities— as a slave of God; a follower of the Prophet Mohammed ﷺ who is awaiting the return of the Prophet Jesus; a son; a neighbor; a father, a husband; a Muslim; a nephew; a cousin; an uncle; and a friend, with doing whatever is in my power to bridge the gap between your daughter and myself so that your granddaughter can spend as much time as possible with her parents, in the best possible environment. And the best possible environment would be one in which she sees her parents and her peers every day striving to fulfill their purpose in life and worship the Lord of all creation with exclusive devotion.

It has become clear to me that the United States culture is actively hostile to this purpose. The overwhelming weight of American values clearly reflects a preference for the life of this world over the life to come, and the widespread materialism and injustice which plague the society are a symptom of this

crisis.

Egypt is by no means a perfect society, but the reality is that the worship of God is a much bigger part, on average, of people's lives than it is in America. I have an unmistakable impression that the number of people who carry with them a spiritual light in their conduct seems very clearly to be greater, although they are still a minority. I don't consider living there a permanent solution, but as I said, simply a step in what I hope to be the right direction. Your concerns about my finances and professional status are understandable, but I have found the Quran and sunnah to be a fount of truth far more valuable than any monetary resource, and God is facilitating my livelihood as I seek these riches.

Wealth in Islam, Failed Mediation, the Importance of Patriarchy

I suppose earning money is nothing more than a reflection of being valued by an individual or group of individuals. Your pay comes from your boss, who gets the money from the government, I suppose. You work according to certain guidelines, and you are paid for it, because this work is valuable to a collective of individuals who view it to be in their interest, and as such they support you.

You help put individuals back to work, which helps to maintain the economy. This generates both economic output (which translates to people's acceptance of the right of the government to rule) as well as tax revenue, so it is clear why the government would value this. Worker's compensation also ensures that people continue to buy and consume, which supports the continued functioning of the economy. It is surely beneficial to individuals as well, because we derive our sense of self worth from our service to others, so you help people by helping them to get back to work, or to maintain their families through social welfare programs that are necessary in the absence of extended family support networks.

Although I am not paid for my writing, I still have more than enough money to cover my own expenses. This money would also go towards my ex-wife's upkeep if we are to get back together.

But this excessive focus on money is just the kind of autistic thinking that is at the root of a lot of our problems. Your family seems to believe that I am wasting my money on trying to help my fellow Muslims, but the Prophet

Muhammed ﷺ assured us that who helps his Muslim brother, Allah will help him. This help may take many forms other than money.

We discussed before the notion that God helps those who help themselves; “themselves” here does not necessarily mean an individual helping their self, but a community where individuals help each other. My religion teaches that giving charity does not decrease, but rather increases, wealth. The perceptions of Muslim countries as being poor is due in large part to a very narrow conception of wealth.

Another principle in Islam is that who relies on God, God will be sufficient for them. I say all this because your tone when you commented about my writing was rather insulting, as if you view inviting others to the truth to be something of a waste of time.

I am grateful that Allah has provided me with adequate wealth, because although I know that the knowledge that I am learning and sharing is more valuable than any sum of money, I don't know if my faith is strong enough to endure poverty and the derision that comes with it; the condescending tone of your comment about my writing being a mild example. And Allah does not burden a soul with more than it can bear.

I apologize if I was emotional in my complaint about your not taking the initiative with the mediation. There was a counselor, but I don't think he or she knew any of us, and apparently they were busy so my mom never did arrange an appointment. I think it would have just prolonged the inevitable. You are right when you say that there can be no coercion in religion, and this is why our marriage was doomed from the beginning; our marriage was based on falsehood, because your daughter testified with her tongue a faith that she was not ready or willing to accept with her heart.

As for your wife and (my ex-wife's sister), I personally witnessed a conversation in which (my ex-wife's sister) was spinning my statements and manipulating narratives to make the situation worse than it actually was, and this sabotaging of my image within your family was clearly serving her personal interests on a number of levels.

In spite of the manipulation and distortions leveled against me, your criticism is very correct— my behavior falls well short of my ideals. I am bitter and angry about what I have been through in my life, and I blame American society to some extent. I know that my anger is not productive and

in many ways perpetuates the same destructive cycles. Both my traveling and my embracing of Islam are attempts to escape or transform these patterns, and with Islam, I see some glimmers of success.

Yes, my behavior was in many instances bad, and I very much regret my bad manners. I would also be grateful if they wanted to point it out to me, even in writing, and I have no doubt that they could point out instances in which I would be able to recognize my offenses, acknowledge them, apologize, and seek to right the wrong by following my misdeeds with some good deeds. I would be very happy for this opportunity, although of course there is a devil inside of me always lurking. But just because I, like all of us, have demons does not mean that there is not a sincerely repentant part of me.

While it does not excuse my behavior, I'd like to set the record straight by pointing out that these offenses were by no means a "one way street," as convenient as it is, particularly for women, to play the victim. I also have legitimate grievances, however tactlessly I expressed them, and I have the distinct impression that they are far less willing to acknowledge their errors and humble themselves. I appreciate you trying to talk to them about it though.

It is very offensive that you would suggest that patriarchal societies, like the one that Jesus and the Prophets he revered came from, do not treat women with dignity or respect. Conspicuously absent from your reply is any response to the fact that your daughter suffered abuses and permanent emotional and psychological damage due to the casting off of traditional moral rules of conduct. Patriarchy is the system that has been given to us by God to live in the age that we live in, and by neglecting to live in it we are disregarding His guidance to our own detriment. Worse, to try to reject patriarchy and replace it with something else is to pretend to be superior to God in wisdom.

To illustrate this fact, consider if you did have a position of stronger authority with the family, or consider if your family observed separation of genders as is the custom in practicing Muslim households. You could have stymied (my ex-wife's sister's) conniving against me, or you could have forced some mediation to take place, and for grievances to be aired on all sides.

This would undoubtedly have been better for everyone involved, but as your wife and (my ex-wife's sister) are women, they are more driven by emotion

than logic. This has its place, but must be counterbalanced by a masculine, rational approach; just as masculine rationality must be counterbalanced by emotional sensibilities.

Or consider if there was a division of genders to begin with; the conflict between (my ex-wife's sister) and myself could have been avoided entirely, and she might not have developed such a strong interest in ending (your daughter) and my marriage.

So in reality it would have been far better for the whole family if you had seized your usurped authority, and insisted that we sit down and try to work out our differences. Not just for peace within our family, but for peace in the whole world. Because to some extent, your wife and (my ex-wife's sister)'s concerns were correct; a mediation would indeed have been an avenue for the communication of my values, and this could very well make something of the truth of Islam manifest.

And if the truth of Islam were allowed through dialogue to become manifest, the impetus underlying this ongoing war would surely be diminished to some extent.

So we are all suffering from this inversion of the order that God has laid out for us, which has been falsely packaged as liberation and evolution as a result of the theological repercussions of Christianity's legacy.

Seeking Balance, Humility in Preaching, and Passing Judgment

I understand you have negative associations from your early experiences with religion which make you averse to an interpretation of religion which focuses on outward aspects of religion or mentions punishment. I come from the opposite background, and growing up there was total disregard of any religious principles.

Both religious outlooks which focus excessively on inner spiritual dimensions and positivity and overly literal, negative approaches to spirituality are dangerous. It is essential to try to find the middle path between these extremes. To suggest that religious approaches that emphasize moral prescriptions and final judgment are bad, and that mystical experience and service to others are good is an oversimplification. These are aspects of living a spiritual life which must be in balance with one another, as all

positive and negative forces in the universe.

I don't intend to sound holier or wiser than anyone, this is just honestly how I think. The best people in Islam have been those who were most concerned with their prayer not being accepted because of their lack of sincerity. I intend to follow their example, and I don't think that my heart is pure. I don't think that my conduct is good. But I have been trained for years in writing, lecturing, and critical analysis, and since God has given me these abilities, I feel it is my responsibility to use them for some purpose.

I mean to say that just because I preach to others does not mean that I think I am holier than them. I am all ears if you have suggestions as how I can better succeed in this mission of seeking and conveying the truth.

I always listen to what you have to say. If you can point out where exactly I come across as condescending I will attempt to amend my way of thinking, speaking and writing. I don't expect to be listened to without listening; I consider deeply the things that you say, for example our discussion on the benefits of flavonoids in citrus fruits. I even had close to a thousand trees planted because of it.

Unfortunately most of the trees died due to my lack of focus, so I'm trying to narrow my focus to do what I am best at. And oddly enough, it seems that I am provided with everything that I need, which is consistent with God's promise.

I know that actions speak louder than words, but unfortunately I don't have any way of reaching you other than words right now. True character may not become apparent while everyone's refrigerators are filled with food, so someone who you may consider to be very spiritual and dedicated to service to others could become a completely different person when faced with severe trials, and someone you consider to be utterly misguided could shine. What is apparent to us may not be the reality, so how can I say who is holy and who is not, when we have not been tested?

The quote you cite is from Paul, and its intent is to do exactly what Jesus said he was not sent to do- to reach out to people other than the lost sheep of Israel. The modern translation is as follows:

"So whatever you believe about these things keep between yourself and God."

This is paving the way for the complete dismantling of the law, shrouded in lofty theological concepts- it is the idea that no one can judge anyone else, which at its logical conclusion leads to moral anarchy. It is possible to pass judgment in a matter of jurisprudence without condemning some action spiritually. There is a principle in Islam that we judge by the outer appearance- even if we consider a person to be a hypocrite, we treat them as a believer unless there are signs of clear apostasy. Even then, it is not a matter of certainty that someone who has apostatized is a disbeliever, but for practical reasons they must be treated as such.

So it is quite necessary to judge, for this is the basis of the law. Modern society has replaced the law of revelation with a law based on human logic, which comes with the notion that there can be no judgment in spiritual matters, but this is a road that leads to destruction, because logic can be used to circumvent morality just as much as it can be used to support it.

Actions are the Proof of Religion, Bad Actions can Erase the Good

Indeed, I believe you are correct, and that the spiritual light of actions speaks more than words, and this is in fact why I became a Muslim. If our actions are representative of our religion, I cannot deny that my experiences in Muslim countries points to the superiority of Islam.

Although I am very happy and grateful for a lot of the kindness and love that you and your family showed me, ultimately the level of compassion, acceptance, kindness, and hospitality I received even as a non-Muslim in the Muslim world has surpassed anything that I have experienced in America or Europe. Don't take that the wrong way; each society, like each individual has its strengths and weaknesses, and American society is definitely much better in terms of material and financial advancement, but I simply don't value those things as much as I value kindness, compassion, and awareness of God, so I guess there is just a dissonance in the value systems.

I can't communicate my experiences to you, and I suppose I can't expect to convince you. Maybe that is one of my shortcomings and the reason for your criticism, that I think that somehow I can convince or guide you, when it is only God who guides.

One thing is sure, however— you either don't understand or don't respect my

beliefs. If you are unwilling to take the time to understand them it can't really be said that you respect them, so in short, you can say that you respect my beliefs, but your use of the tag word 'fundamentalist' (which in your social milieu is pejorative), as well as other cues, point to the fact that your claim of respect and tolerance is extremely shallow.

You are plugged into the polarity of the American collective consciousness, so while you may outwardly hold to the left's facade of tolerance, in your subconscious, the other side of the political spectrum is alive and well. Your privileging of your white granddaughter of European descent over your grandson of Mexican descent is a concrete expression of this latent prejudice.

I'm sorry, I'm not trying to criticize, I'm just trying to explain that I don't believe Obama's attitude towards Muslims to be a single whit better than Trump's. The unelected elite that dominate the popular consciousness are served by both approaches, and your resistance and criticism of the other side gives them energy, and this polarity provides the dynamic tension that keeps America on its wretched course

To see the ideas I'm talking about in action, you would have to be in a social context where these ideas are implemented. This would require going somewhere like Yemen or Afghanistan, which you would be unwilling to undertake because these places are being bombed, partly with the fruit of your labor in the form of tax dollars.

My experience in Afghanistan was that many of the people are living spirit filled lives of love and service to others, and this was the rule, rather than the exception, while the inverse seems to be the case in the US. And I don't deny that people of all faiths are capable of achieving this, but I have clearly seen American cultural imperialism eroding the spirituality of people of all faiths around the world, including in America. I also haven't seen anyone resisting this trend as effectively as the Muslims.

You may be serving others out of compassion, but if your labor is supporting an organization that is transgressing against others and itself, good deeds can ultimately become bad, because you are facilitating and strengthening others in doing evil and helping maintain an order whose net influence is ultimately evil. In a similar vein, no matter how much charity a person does and how good of a neighbor they are, if they have a secret life as a serial killer, their bad deeds will outweigh all of their good deeds in the eyes of the law. The

severity of their crimes are such that the legal punishment is the same, regardless of whatever good deeds they've done.

I ask you to forgive me for whatever transgressions I have made against you or your family, and I stand ready and willing to atone in whatever way you might ask. I think you know me well enough to know that this is not an empty offer.

Actions do speak louder than words, and whatever you say about peace, the fact is about half of the government budget goes toward the military. You probably spend about 70% of your waking hours involved in work or work related activities, and probably 30% of this time goes to the government in the form of taxes. If you were to send this 10% of your income to any Islamic military group that is fighting the United States military, you would be regarded as a criminal and probably sentenced to decades in prison.

And I know you are very well aware that the American government and military are not in the right in this war, in spite of the constant stream of propaganda. There is no way that it is justified for a \$2 billion dollar plane to bomb impoverished fighters with their families living in tents and mud huts in the wilderness in order to fuel a never ending stream of over-consumption.

So you can talk about peace, compassion, and service to others all you want, but ultimately your words are contradicting your actions, and the reason you are not living in line with your ideals is because you are trying to maintain a standard of living that is far beyond what you actually need to survive. And of course this is not entirely your fault, but the social pressure of the society which you choose to continue living in each day.

I can't claim to be perfect by any stretch of the imagination, but I do consider repentance to be essential, and part of repentance means making the firm resolution to move away from sin. But the Pauline theology you advocate would suggest that it is unacceptable to even condemn what is wrong.

I understand if you reject me because this sounds similar to hypocritical admonitions you have received in the past. Perhaps I am being hypocritical as well, but nonetheless it is an obligation for a Muslim to know right and wrong, and to enjoin the good and forbid the evil. I wish that I had the compassion and patience of someone more spiritually advanced. I do

believe, however, that Jesus was harsh in his condemnation of those who contaminated the purity of the temple with banking and interest, and that he did so in a way that was both angry and violent. I believe it was also in his character to express harshness towards the disbelievers when he stated "let the dead bury their dead." However, I also have no doubt that Jesus walked with more compassion and sincerity than I will ever be able to, and I know I am lacking in this regard, which is why I ask for your forgiveness.

I hope you will be able to distinguish the message I am attempting to communicate from my own character failings.

Truth, Falsehood, and the Book of Urantia

As I said, you do not respect my beliefs, and nor do I respect yours. I respect the truth, and many of your beliefs are true, just as many of mine are false. I respect the beliefs of yours that are true and I reject those that are false. The Quran is the criterion against which we can examine our beliefs and determine if they are true or false. I know you have a lot to teach me about the truth, and that I also have knowledge of the truth that has not yet come to you.

It would not be doing you any favor to respect false beliefs and to encourage you to hold them when they are detrimental to your own soul. If you hold up your beliefs against the criterion of the Quran, you will find that what you lose was not really all that valuable to begin with. While large sections of the Urantia book are very entertaining and fun to contemplate, they are ultimately not spiritually beneficial, and seem to serve more to give an impression of the vast knowledge of the author.

Since you referenced those quotes from the Urantia book, I have been reading more and more passages. Some of the references to Islam are blatantly false, and others are extremely insulting.

For example, it is stated that Muslims believe Mohammed ﷺ is going to return (completely incorrect) and that the black stone in the Kaaba is a fetish, which is also false. It is a fundamental doctrine that the black stone itself has no power to harm or benefit anyone- rather it is symbolic of the link to the heavens, as it is a meteorite.

In general, the attitude towards Islam is that it is a primitive and backward

religion of savages who are incapable (like children) of grasping the trinity.

I have spent years as a student trying to dispel the very incomplete perspective that a linear hierarchy of social progress exists and that European civilization is more advanced on this hierarchy, and that traditional peoples are further behind on this evolutionary ladder. While this perspective can be argued, it ignores newly researched phenomena like horizontal genetic transfer, and the reality is that to ascribe linear evolution to an n-dimensional universe is a gross oversimplification, even if clothed in complex language and concepts.

The subject of my thesis was refuting just this kind of racist thinking. William Sadler, who compiled the Urantia book, was a member of the Eugenics society, and this thinking is present throughout the book.

I understand that you encountered the Urantia book at a time when you were having a crisis of faith, and that it helped you reconcile some of what you were learning about the scientific view of the world with the holy scripture. This is probably for the best, because many people “throw the baby out with the bathwater,” when leaving their religion and abandon many of the true and good ideals that are part of it.

The thought of the period in which was written is clearly present in the Urantia book, and many of these assumptions, while they may have been formulated with the best of intentions, reinforce an oppressive racial hierarchy, which can hardly be a step on any kind of desirable spiritual evolution, although these assumptions were not out of the ordinary at the time the book was first compiled. Matthew Block, a reader of the Urantia book, has found source material from the Urantia book which was directly incorporated from at least 120 different sources published at the time it was authored, sometimes with nearly the exact sentence structure and wording. Many of these texts were contemporary scientific literature of the era which has since fallen out of fashion or been otherwise disproved.

The Vicious Cycle of Independence

There is a saying from one of the scholars of Islam that a misfortune that brings us closer to God is better than a blessing that makes us forget Him.

Your daughter and I fell into a kind of vicious cycle. I had the money to support her, but personally I didn't want to live at a standard that seemed

decadent or wasteful to me. And although I was able to provide for us, she didn't trust me, so she didn't want to give up her own income. Since she continued to support herself after we married, I devoted my income towards other things, because she really didn't need anything, and I saw other people in dire need.

My spending my money to try to help others reinforced her fear that I would not support her if she gave up her income and traveled abroad with me to study. You can be assured, though, that if she had ever had actual need that I would never let her and my daughter endure hardship while supporting people outside of our family.

The act of giving is an act that increases love. When a wife is dependent on her husband, she needs him. Each time he brings food home, it is a gift which increases an emotional bond. In a traditional setting, children also contribute to the livelihood of the household from an early age, so when the wife cares for the children, the husband understands the real economic value of her contribution.

He is also dependent on her for food preparation, washing, and many other household activities. So this is a beneficial mutual dependence, and each act of giving increases a bond of love. But with the modern lifestyle, both husband and wife have their own income; they can easily access prepared food, meaning the prospect of separation is not so frightening; and children become an economic burden rather than an asset.

I was asking your daughter to move more towards a traditional lifestyle, but this would have required a leap of faith which she was unwilling to take. This is actually a manifestation of the ethos of freedom; ultimately, for a husband and wife to depend on each other limits their individual freedom. It gives them more power, however, as a family.

And therein lies the reason why families are disintegrating in America at steadily increasing rates; we are taught to focus on our individual desires and interests, as this makes us better consumers and drives the economy.

Imposition of Belief

As I mentioned earlier, I don't think that I have the right to impose my beliefs on others; that is, I cannot force anyone to believe what I believe.

However, rules are necessary for law and order. By supporting a democracy, what you are saying is that if enough people support something, that they have the right to impose this belief on others in the form of a law. So your statement that I don't have the right to impose my beliefs on others is contradictory to your support of a democratic regime- it is the definition of democracy that some impose their beliefs upon others simply by virtue of being greater in number.

Your daughter hastily professed faith because she wanted to marry me, although she did not have the internal conviction. This was a grave error. It was my hope that by following the outer guidance of Islam that the internal belief would follow with time. This was somewhat successful as she witnessed many of the advantages of an Islamic lifestyle, but the effect of her peer group left her unwilling to live at odds with the norms of the society. I have no doubt (and your daughter has told me this herself), that she would have no issues with practicing Islam if she lived in an Islamic society.

Even if we are never able to bring our family back together, it is still my hope that she will heed God's guidance that has been communicated to us via both the message of the Quran, and the example of the Prophet Mohammed ﷺ who is a brother of Jesus and the successor of the same tradition of Prophecy represented by Moses and Jesus.

I am sure that if you can recognize the truth of Islam and implement it in your life it would have an effect on your daughter. And I am sure that if she accepted Islam with sincerity it would be possible for us to repair our family. And even if we did not marry again, if you could convince her of the truth of Islam, this would be a tremendous benefit to my daughter and your granddaughter. This is why I continue to make this effort to write and discuss with you.

I know that the political and social climate make the prospect of adopting an Islamic lifestyle intimidating. But it is very often that doing the right thing is not the easy thing.

I apologize again if my criticisms seem harsh or judgmental, but I hope you know that these criticisms come not out of a desire to put you down, but rather out of care and compassion for you, your family, and the community of my fellow Muslims, who due to your allegiance to America, you are at war with. And I am sorry that I myself am so wounded in that I am unable to be more compassionate in my communications with you.

In spite of my criticism, I realize there is a distance between ideals and reality, and I'm not suggesting you immediately quit your job or sell your house or completely restructure your life. But I do ask you to at least acknowledge what is right and wrong, and recognize that you are engaged, just like me, and everyone else, in actions that are crimes against ourselves and against God. I'm asking that you acknowledge that we are in need of God's mercy, and to take concrete steps, however small, to come closer to living in line with God's will.

The Lust for Wealth

It's very clear that the illnesses afflicting American society from excessive wealth far outnumber those resulting from lack of wealth. So I have to wonder why people are so afraid of having less. This over-consumption seems to be an animal mentality, and one of the main purposes of spirituality is to prevent these desires from destroying us. And of course, from everything I have learned about the world, there is a clear link between over-consumption and human suffering, if we look at a broad enough spatial and temporal scope. So fasting, voluntary giving to those in need, and standing in opposition to those that would transgress against others in order to maintain an excessive and wasteful way of living all seem to be acts of the highest virtue.

Just because we enjoy our overabundance of wealth does not make it right—obese people also enjoy having more potato chips, but that doesn't mean that their supply of potato chips should be maintained, even if cutting it off means going to war with their own body. Cutting it off would be best, because no one needs potato chips to survive, and the path to health would be swifter without them entirely. If completely eliminating potato chips from the diet proves impossible, it would be worthwhile to at least try to limit the amount consumed.

Moral precepts and prescriptions are guidance to show us just what the potato chips of our spiritual obesity are. Adultery or modes of behavior that could lead to adultery, backbiting, interest, graven images, or miserliness, are a few examples. Religion also shows us the spiritual equivalents of healthy food and exercise—things like prayer, charity, fasting, speaking kind words, helping neighbors, visiting the sick, and giving gifts to family. While following these guidelines may be difficult at times, it is what is best for us, and to disregard this guidance is to refuse God's mercy and generosity.

I have written a lot trying to understand your beliefs and find the commonalities and differences between our beliefs, and I would hope that this would be returned in kind. But while I take issue with your beliefs, it seems that the criticisms from your side are of my person, rather than Islam. From my part, I don't believe I have offered any criticisms of your person.

Perhaps this is because you are trying to show respect for the religion, but you should know that the truth is not disturbed or damaged by sincere critical analysis, rather, it becomes more manifest. You are not taking time to respond to any of the points I am making or explaining the reasoning for why you believe what you do, beyond stating that you disagree.

Maybe you don't have time to reflect on these things because you are busy trying to maintain your standard of living and are under pressure, like all of us, from the demands of society. Indeed, life in America feels like a continuous rush to ensure continued access to a wide range of material luxuries, although all of us seem to be aware that this lifestyle goes far beyond our needs. In fact, one of the things that Americans busy themselves with most is a continuous struggle to avoid gaining weight!

Part of why I am in Egypt is to get away from this lifestyle, and to have time to reflect on questions of religion. As I mentioned to you in one of our conversations, my statistical research has shown that Egypt is considerably safer than America. And you can feel this tranquility when you walk in the streets here. I say this to reassure you, in case you would like to accompany your daughter or granddaughter for a visit someday.

The Consequences of Mixing the Human and the Divine and Sustainable Lifestyles

Egypt is an excellent place for gaining knowledge of Islam, and being well versed in Islamic teachings will be of great value when the current global order begins to disintegrate. The strategies that help us survive in the context of modern industrial civilization will become increasingly ineffective, and we will see more democracies falling into dictatorships and war, as democracies have historically done when faced with the resource shortfalls that inevitably follow periods of unrestrained consumption.

Islamic law provides a very robust and just system of government which can operate in this kind of tumultuous environment. It also provides an identity

which can help people of different ethnicities to work together with common purpose and live in harmony with each other, which could be tremendously useful in a time of crisis.

As for why your daughter doesn't want to support this, I suppose it is because she doesn't believe that these beliefs do, in fact, have such value. In my estimation, your daughter is extremely foolish for settling for the security of a stable salary in an institutional setting, when she could live a life of connection to God, knowing purity and the grace of being faced with hardship and being delivered by virtue of sincere supplication, rather than being deceived by the illusory power of worldly wealth.

I am sure that the god described in the New Testament cannot be reconciled with the God of the Quran and Torah; and I know that the God of the Quran and Torah is the God that Jesus worshiped. So I do not worship what you worship, nor do you worship what I worship. This is part of why your daughter and I grew apart. We could not connect in our worship, or worship God together.

As I mentioned earlier, in the theology of the Urantia book (and the channeled material that your wife and daughter subscribe to), it is scary to see how remote and distant God is. The idea that little pieces of God are contained within us is even scarier.

It is clear to me that there is a connection between this theology and the prison-industrial complex, the military-industrial complex, the racist knowledge hierarchy, the interest payments on the national debt (13% of total annual government revenue), the IMF loans to poor countries that displace the rural poor and generate slums, break up families, and force people into factories at slave wages, the CIA torture programs, the support for brutal dictators including a number of genocides, and on and on.

The conception of God as being a human being, or the idea that God is inside us, allows us to place our intellects above the moral law of revelation. It allows us to make things lawful according to our intellect. This is why interest banking was legalized in Europe after a thousand years of prohibition, and now America is increasingly enslaved by an ever deepening cycle of debt. The recent wars that caused so much devastation appear to be very much connected to that debt.

Likewise, interest banking is also used for wreaking untold suffering on the

colonized areas of Africa, Asia, and Latin America. This whole world system seems to be organized along racial lines, and I can't help but think that this is related to the depiction of God as a light skinned, ethnically European man. In Latin America, as a light skinned man with long brown hair, I often had poorly educated Catholics approach me with an attitude of reverence, as if I was holy because I resembled the image of Jesus they had been trained to worship.

The American way of life is consuming the earth. There are many similar episodes in history; the parallels to the Roman empire are striking. And all of these episodes indicate that periods of imperial growth and rampant over-consumption are followed by periods of plague, hunger, and war as resources are gradually exhausted.

If we consider that our over-consumption is the cause of this future suffering, our wasteful and extravagant lifestyle amounts to a horrible weight of sin, and all this is only what is apparent. What is hidden may be much worse, so we need some seriously heavy good deeds to counter this. It is not by our deeds that salvation is achieved, but by God's mercy; it is by striving to obey God and to follow those who God loves that we can hope to attain to that mercy. And we can know God's will through the Quran, and by studying the Bible, and perhaps even the Urantia book, as well, if we use the Quran as a filter to distinguish truth from falsehood.

So while making a change is difficult, I hope that you can see the terrible consequences of acquiescing to the status quo. I am holding out for your daughter to come around. I am confident that even if I have other wives, I can still spend more time with her and my daughter and provide better emotional support than her new boyfriend can, even without participating in your nationalist ritual feasts like birthdays, Christmas and Thanksgiving.⁷⁰

With effort, I believe that we can still maintain a strong bond with your family without observing these traditions. But it requires a massive restructuring of values and beliefs, and some major ego demolition, which we will have to go through together. Again, I don't know how to do this but I know if we ask God with sincerity that He will help us.

70. I pleaded with my ex-wife to wait until her iddah, or Islamic waiting period after divorce had passed, but she refused and initiated a new relationship immediately. I then pleaded with her not to have the new boyfriend interact with our daughter until she had been with him for at least one year. She also refused this advice. He left her after 6 months.

So regardless of the worldly outcome, the heavenly rewards are secure where no thief can steal them and no rats or insects can eat them, God willing.⁷¹

I started working on a research project as a result of our correspondence. Maybe you recall that we once discussed the idea of writing a one earth cookbook that would contain recipes as well as a lifestyle table for calculating a sustainable lifestyle. I abandoned the project when I realized it would be very difficult to accurately calculate, but I found that it is much easier to calculate a sustainable level of consumption as a monetary sum; it works out to approximately \$800 a month, per person.

This is still more than most people on the earth live on. Living at this standard really fosters self reliance and togetherness in a beautiful way, and at the same time leaves a person very much secured from malnutrition. But the society in the US seems intentionally designed to make living at this level nearly impossible. At the same time, in many countries that provide the raw materials and labor necessary for the smooth functioning of the world economy, this standard of living is unreachable.

So adjusting to this lifestyle would likely be as difficult in terms of hardship as settling the American West was for the first generation of pioneers. But it would also become easier as more and more people adjusted to such a lifestyle, just as the first generation of pioneers smoothed the way for those who came after them.

Anyway, I'm sorry to have abandoned that project. I did recently complete a commentary on the first surah of the Quran, though, which you are welcome to read. Have you looked at my thesis yet?

I appreciate our correspondence, and you have inspired me to pursue other projects, including a more thorough description of the historical evolution of gender relations from a global perspective with an eye to economic and political motives, as well as an exploration of the foundational assumptions of what I call the “science fiction salvation” eschatology.

The Value of Religious Knowledge

Wow, thank you for replying, I'm very happy for any effort to engage with these concerns, and at the moment it is the best option I have for working

71. Reference to Matthew 6:19

indirectly towards a reunion with my daughter. At the very least I can save these letters for her when she is older, because I want there to be plenty of documentation of what exactly caused this split, and I want her to see that I made effort to correct the rift, so that she will not think that I happily accepted us not seeing one each other.

Theology used to be a most respected course of study. It is still common among practicing Jews, Muslims, and Buddhists to support individuals who dedicate themselves to the study of scripture and understanding of theology, and great esteem is given to this position. This used to be the case among Christians as well; it was the most gifted students that were granted places in the faculties of theology. In fact, among religious Jews, to marry your daughter to a man who is studying religious knowledge is considered as an act of charity for the sake of God.

I suppose nowadays, since you don't make much money with it, the study of religious knowledge is relegated to the status of some kind of bizarre hobby.

I have never undertaken a serious course on theology and generally I think it is better not to go too into depth on it, because as you say, the infinite cannot be encompassed by the finite. But there are some fundamentals; the purpose of revelation, it seems, is to help us understand our individual spiritual experience in a way that can help us to integrate it into a community. I am striving to communicate what I have learned of the revelation, and I hope relating my individual experience can help to make it more accessible, but I fear instead of elucidating the truth, I may end up obscuring it, since my own soul is filled with prejudices, whims, and desires.

I try nonetheless, because our culture's collective experience with religion has been so horrible that many are extremely wary of the doctrines that are shared between Christianity and Islam, and reject them outright due to this collective trauma. This was certainly my response upon reading a translation of the Quran for the first time as a teenager; a few mentions of hellfire just left me shaking my head and moving on to the next thing. It seemed similar enough to Christianity that I discounted it immediately, since my experiences with Christians had already caused me to reject Christianity outright.

A common point that came up in my discussions with your daughter was her rejection of the concept of hell, and I've noticed that you also seem to share this view. A major reason for the disintegration of our relationship is that she

did not want to support me in seeking religious knowledge. The relation to the concept of hell helps to clarify why the study of theology no longer carries the prestige it once did, as well as why she did not see supporting me in my studies as a wise move; if religious knowledge truly has the power to save us from hell, it would indeed be very valuable, and it would be worth making sacrifices to support a family member in gaining that knowledge.

If, however, the idea of hell is rejected outright, and a doctrine spreads that teaches that everyone is assured eventual spiritual salvation, what does it really matter if we have deep knowledge of theology and morality or not?

Capitalism and Communism: the Evolution of Judeo-Christian Theology

Since the threat of hellfire has been used so much to control people, it's understandable to dismiss it as nothing more than a mechanism of social control. One of the central theses of Marxism is that the doctrine of striving for reward in the afterlife is more or less a fraudulent trick used for the oppression of humanity. This is what I call "throwing the baby out with the bathwater." Theological disputes take on great importance when religion is the guiding principle for the structure of society, and secularism and Marxism were meant to solve this problem. A century later, tens of millions of people have died in horrible conflicts centered around theological differences between secular ideologies of capitalism, communism, and fascism. I say theological, because theology essentially relates to fundamental values about what is true, and what is right. One of the names of God in Islam is "the Truth."

I'm not saying the basic tendency of Marxism is completely wrong, but I think it is an excessive reaction, and worse, it tries to universalize lessons that really only make sense in the European experience. It's clear looking at the Soviet experience that state Marxism was very much a religion.

If we recognize the cold war as essentially a theological dispute, it becomes clear that the stakes are pretty high with theology, and it is understandable why society once felt it important that the best and brightest become theologians. The western narrative uses "medieval" as a pejorative, and then speaks of the glories of the cultural and scientific "Renaissance" and "Enlightenment" in which the classical Greco-Roman tradition began to

supersede Christianity as the organizing principle of society.

This narrative conveniently overlooks the fact that the horrors of the middle ages were due in large part to the ecological and political fallout caused by the tyranny, decadence, and materialism of the Roman Empire (which was largely based on pagan Greek philosophy). It is also commonplace to overlook the fact that it was the piety and austerity of the Church that laid the foundation for the recovery from this trauma which eventually coalesced in the Renaissance. And the American system, modelled after the Roman system, is now dominating the world and falling into the same mistakes. However, needless to say, *any* religious beliefs, right or wrong, always seem to end up being used for ulterior motives.

I appreciate your patience with the long letters. I don't feel that anything I am writing is unnecessary or irrelevant, but I understand it is a lot of volume. I just don't quite have the self discipline and organizational skills to actually finish many of my ideas for books as yet, so I end up communicating a lot of ideas in correspondence. I am adding subheadings with the hope that it will improve readability.

I'm very curious as to how the notion of the God of the old testament has become nearly taboo in modern discourse. It's as if people forget this was the God that Jesus worshipped and believed in, and who enabled the miracles of Jesus. Many have noted that there is a fundamental dissonance between the God of the Old Testament and the New Testament, and there are numerous books exploring different theories about this. I won't pretend that I've read them- my impressions come more from simple observations.

Essential Division between Divine Unity and Mundane Duality

God is one, so as soon as there is 'other' than God, there is duality— that is to say, from the moment that creation begins, there is God, and then there is that which is *not* God.

God said in His book:

"And all things We have created by pairs, that haply ye may reflect."⁷²

72. Quran, 51:49

Matter appears to be held together by negative and positive charge. Actors in economies are driven by the seeking of profit and the avoidance of loss. The complexity of the weather results from the interaction between heat and cold. The universe and time move by means of duality- it is the essence of our existence. Without this duality, our own existence is inconceivable. If this is true of the earthly existence that we can observe, why would it not extend to the spiritual and the realm of the unseen? That is to say, is it really so implausible that there are desirable and undesirable outcomes in the life to come?

The universe appears to be created in perfect balance. The Quran exemplifies this balance: the words "paradise" and "hell" are each repeated 77 times within the text of the Quran. "Man" and "Woman" are each repeated 23 times, the same as the number of human chromosomes from the mother and father, each. "Angels" is repeated 88 times, and the word "devils" is mentioned the same number of times. It's as if this balance and equilibrium is a sign of God's work.

As you say, one of our challenges in life is "to be more like Him (God) in our natures," then it seems that to be nearer to God would mean to be more in harmony with this divinely ordained natural balance.

I don't doubt that your or my intention is to be other than a monotheist; but is it really so simple and easy to be a monotheist? I'm reminded of the parable of the narrow gate:

"Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it."⁷³

The Problem of Divine Love and Hell

The logical challenge here for many is that if God loves everyone as his children, how could he possibly condemn them to timeless torment for believing in the wrong doctrine? For me, the answer is simple- this love is expressed by the fact that everyone is given the choice to accept or refuse

73 Matthew 7:14-15

God's mercy, and each soul bears the consequences of its own choices. It is impossible to construct a complex building without precisely laid plans, and likewise, it is impossible that our actions will have the desired outcome if they are not undertaken with sound intentions.

This is where this conceptual barrier between the divine and the mundane becomes so important- if we are to worship God, we must know what God is, and what God is not, else we risk having other objects of worship beside him. If pantheism were the correct understanding, it would be unnecessary to have the first commandment, to have no other gods beside the One, because the omnipresence of God would assure that no form of worship could be wrong.

What is clear from the Quran, and the Bible as well, as far as I know, is that there are behaviors that God loves and does not love. And it is repeatedly and clearly expressed in both the Quran and Bible that the worst action a human can commit is worshiping aspects of the creation *other than* the Creator, alongside with or instead of the perfect unity of the Creator.

I believe firmly that the balance of nature and the command of God are one, and that nature is perfectly designed for our own well being as human beings, and is thus a perfect expression of love. To rebel against this order and reject it is nothing more or less than the rejection of love. How can we say that we are loved by God and simultaneously reject His love?

If indeed there are actions that are beloved to God and those that are hated, there would also be individuals who God loves and does not love, according to their actions. Many cultures and tradition allude to the final judgment of one's actions with the metaphor of a scale or balance on which righteous and evil actions are weighed.

Of course, God's mercy is vast and he can forgive whom he wills, but how about the one who rejects his forgiveness by believing it to be unnecessary?

The tribe of Israel were a people that were loved by the Lord, providing a good example of the reality that God's love for all humans is neither unconditional nor automatic. In the case of the children of Israel being "chosen" or having a special status with God, this can be traced back to the unique relationship between Abraham and God, whereby God promised Abraham that he would bless his descendants. This manifests in the long line of Prophets that were sent to the descendants of Isaac, culminating with

Jesus. Genesis 22 describes God as saying:

"I swear by myself, declares the LORD, that because you have done this and have not withheld your son, your only son, I will surely bless you and make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and as the sand on the seashore. Your descendants will take possession of the cities of their enemies, and through your offspring all nations on earth will be blessed, because you have obeyed me."

As an aside, the mention of an only son is strange, because the "only" son is specified as Isaac in the Bible, yet he is clearly not the only son. It seems inconceivable that this blessing would extent to descendants by Isaac and not Ishmael. In any case, this blessing extends from Abraham to his descendants by virtue of the love that existed between God and Abraham; this is the basis of the covenant.

The very notion of a covenant indicates that there is a connection between God's love and blessings and obedience. If my theory is correct, this means that the law of God is a direct expression of love, and that by obeying it we are accepting this love. The law, however, is manifest in the Prophets, and in the narrative of the New Testament Jesus often uses the words "law and prophets" in conjunction with each other.

If the love of God and the wisdom of God were so accessible, there would hardly be a need for Prophets. I think this is what is meant with the expression "No one comes to the father except through me."⁷⁴ or, as the Prophet Mohammed said:

*"None of you will have faith till he loves me more than his father, his children and all mankind."*⁷⁵

Some difficulty enters here, and some danger of violating the sanctity of the boundary between the Creator and the creation. If Prophets act as human gateways to God, where does the human end and the Godly begin? If to love a human being is the same as to love God, could it not be said that this person is somehow a part of God?

At the same time, it is also clear in the Bible that God's love is indeed

74 John 14:16

75. Sahih al-Bukhari 15

conditional. Jesus is recorded in the Gospels as saying:

"If you obey my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have obeyed my Father's commands and remain in his love"⁷⁶

There is a hadith, a narration from the Prophet Muhammed that expresses a similar sentiment.

Abu Huraira رضي الله عنه narrated that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said:

"Allah, the Exalted said... "Whoever takes a Wali (close friend) of Mine an enemy, I will wage war on him; and My slave will not perform any act with which he draws closer to Me, more beloved to Me than when he fulfills what I have ordained on him; and My slave will keep drawing closer to Me by performing the Nawafil (voluntary acts of worship) until I love him, and when I love him, I will be his hearing with which he hears, his sight with which he sees, his hands with which he strikes, and his legs with which he walks; and if he asks Me, I will give him; and if he seeks refuge with Me, I will grant him refuge".⁷⁷

This is consistent with the friendship that existed between Abraham and God— it shows that there is such a thing as love that can exist between God and a human being, and at the same time, that this love is conditional. The motion of nature seems to represents the intelligence and the will of God, although this will and intelligence is much larger than what we know of as nature. When a person reaches the state of enlightenment or sainthood, or realization of fundamental truth, they enter into a state of harmony with this nature where miracles become possible by the permission of God, like walking on water, or like the description of the harmony of animals with St. Francis.

This state is characterized by a knowledge of God that is such that the worshiper enters a state of complete submission to and acceptance of the will of the Creator which in Arabic is called "Islam."

The reason I brought all this up is in response to the passage in the Urantia

76 John 15:10

77. 40 Hadith Nawawi 38

Book:

"In these ways and in many others, in ways unknown to you and utterly beyond finite comprehension, does the Paradise Father lovingly and willingly downstep and otherwise modify, dilute, and attenuate his infinity in order that he may be able to draw nearer the finite minds of his creature children. And so, through a series of personality distributions which are diminishingly absolute, the infinite Father is enabled to enjoy close contact with the diverse intelligences of the many realms of his far-flung universe."

This is at odds with the conception of Prophethood outlined in the Bible and Quran, which I alluded to by the statements of Jesus and Mohammed which equated the love of the Prophets with the love of God. There is no need to "dilute" divinity- another name of God is "the absolute."

Rather, this divinity is communicated by the Prophets without any dilution. Likewise, there is no need for God to "modify" His nature- He is perfect and eternal. Furthermore, absoluteness can by definition not be "diminished." Once it is, it is no longer absolute. Lastly, God is capable of all things, and does not need to degrade Himself to achieve closeness to His creation- He is present with us all the time, but it is by means of the message of the Prophets that we learn to understand this presence and become more aware, and thus nearer, to Him.

The Urantia book continues thusly:

"All this he has done and now does, and evermore will continue to do, without in the least detracting from the fact and reality of his infinity, eternity, and primacy. And these things are absolutely true, notwithstanding the difficulty of their comprehension, the mystery in which they are enshrouded, or the impossibility of their being fully understood by creatures such as dwell on Urantia."

This is very similar to the trinity, in that we are told to accept it even though it doesn't make any sense. We are told that God is not absolute, not eternal, and not all powerful, or that we should worship something that does not have these attributes, and then we are told that actually, it does have these attributes but we are incapable of understanding it.

From my understanding of the traditional scripture, the Prophets play a central role, because the creation is dying while the Creator is eternal.

There is a special love that exists between God and the Prophets, and we are not Prophets— rather, our relationship to the Prophets is a reflection or an essential aspect of our relationship to God. God has special love for the Prophets, and the Prophecy is a manifestation of this love. It is part of the nature of love to dislike or hate whatever harms the object of one's love. Love is a connection, and an attack on your beloved means an attack on you. I believe this is why both Jesus and Mohammed told their followers that it was not possible to reject them and at the same time love God; rejection or repulsion of whatever it is that is harming your beloved is a natural and necessary reaction. At the most basic level, love is attraction and hatred is repulsion- just as the physical universe is held together by negative and positive forces, emotions too governed by attraction and repulsion.

The Paraclete and the Roots of Individualism

When researching the Urantia book, specifically about the thought adjusters, I came upon something key, and it's something key in Islam as well. The issue is how we understand the prophecy of the Paraclete. This is pretty important, because according to the narrative of the new testament Jesus really left his followers in suspense about the Paraclete. He even said that his leaving the earth was a good thing because it meant that the Paraclete would come.

All the interpretations I read from Christian sources stated that this Paraclete was the descent of the holy spirit on the Pentecost. This never made sense to me for several reasons. First is the wording of the prophecy of the Paraclete. It speaks in the third person of a male "**he** will speak not on his own initiative" and "**he** will lead you into the truth." Secondly, the prophecy is referring to someone who is speaking words that are not his own.

If we assume that the "he" that is being referred to here is the holy spirit, it doesn't seem to match, since in the Pentecost it was a number of human beings that were speaking. They were the ones forming the words, yet it is understood that it was the holy spirit speaking through them. But if the "he" here is referring to the holy spirit, how can we say that his words were not his own? If the holy spirit is part of the trinity which spoke through the Christians at the Pentecost, whose words would "he" be speaking, if not his own?

There are other issues with the book of Acts, which is where the story of the Pentecost appears. The author is unknown, but understood to be a traveling companion of Paul, who was also not present at the Pentecost. However, there are theological differences and inconsistencies in the narration. Most of Acts is written in the third person, but certain parts are written in the plural first person. Modern scholars have speculated that these "we" verses were added to give the impression that the account was written by a witness of the events or even by an author who had contact with witnesses to the events, while this is probably not the case.

I'm not really an expert on the textual analysis, but from my first reading of the new testament I felt the explanation of the Pentecost was unsatisfactory.

As I understand it, the Urantia book also accepts the idea that the Pentecost was the fulfillment of the prophecy, and that the thought adjusters are the holy spirit or the spirit of truth, which are essentially a piece of God that dwells inside the human and guides moral decisions. The regular functioning of a thought adjuster, however, appears to be quite different from what is described as happening at the Pentecost, where the companions of Jesus began speaking unintelligibly in foreign languages about the glory of God.

From what I have gathered from various understandings of the scripture, Satan follows a consistent pattern of rebellion, and one of his most well known tricks is convincing human beings that they can become divine, or like God. This is the description of the story of the descent from the garden; Satan told the first humans that the reason God had made the forbidden fruit forbidden was because eating it would make them like God. The tower of Babel, a fine metaphor for technological globalization, was built with the intention of attaining the level of God.

The idea that a piece of God is somehow inside us is incredibly appealing, because it may make us feel free from traditional moral constraints or social expectations. The law is cast aside, and we are free to follow our inner voice, and we are told that our own inner voice is actually, in some way, God. This is the ultimate result of accepting the idea that the holy spirit is God, and can speak through *any* human alive today.

It plays very well into the philosophical movement of individualism that has risen in tandem to the scientific, empirical, and rationalist cosmology. In this cosmology, the subordination of the individual to the will of society is

oppressive, and the more able an individual is to exercise their agency, the more advanced the society in which they live is considered. The belief that God is contained within each human being means that every person has a right to become a source of law. This naturally tends towards individualism. One of the reasons I believe this outlook is not correct is because it clashes with basic natural boundaries. While I was traveling, I noticed that the more in balance with nature a culture seemed to be, the less individual agency the members of the culture tended to have. I learned about the wisdom behind this principle in economics as well; with economy of scale, larger, collaborative processes tend to be more efficient than smaller ones because they enable specialization.

Western society seems to have no trouble applying this principle to *production efficiency*, but for some reason *consumption efficiency* never enters the discussion. That is to say, we are obsessed with producing and earning more, to the point that we forget that the same ends can be achieved by consuming less.

Liberty, Consumption, and the Inevitable Victory of Islam

While a society with lower consumption will usually have more longevity, there is no denying the short term power of a highly consumptive society.

This is also the reason why fighting globalization is ultimately futile- power will always tend towards bigger organizational units and more centralization until the underlying resources are exhausted.

The result of past civilizations that have engaged in over-consumption in a manner similar to America have ended up converting the area under their dominion into more arid biomes. I have noticed two things:

1. The percentage of earth that can be characterized as arid is steadily increasing.
2. Islam consistently tends to thrive in arid areas.

So it seems that the over-consumption that characterizes modern life will transform the earth in such a way that supports Islam becoming the dominant organizing principle of the entire earth. This is consistent with the prophecy brought by Muhammed ﷺ and as such my observation of history and geopolitics is a confirmation of my faith, although my faith was also

formed by a multitude of other events and considerations.

In the context of the European experience, the elevation of the ideal of liberty is quite understandable- the corruption of Christianity manifested in the wars of the Reformation made medieval Europe so unbearable that people still shudder thinking about it today. This incredible and widespread cruelty was also the drive, the engine that drove European colonization of the world; the colonists were driven, as if possessed, to escape the horrors of Europe. Many torture museums across Europe, and even in Canada provide a reminder of the cruelty of this era.

So secularism and individualism definitely present a way out of this, but because of the materialist nature of these doctrines, the escape route is necessarily very resource intensive, resulting in the profoundly environmentally destructive world order we presently live in.

I hope it doesn't seem like I am diverging too much, I am just trying to look deeper to understand why we live the way we do. It's important to consider this, because a large part of the rift between your daughter and I stemmed from the fact that I was unwilling to accept the American way of life, while she was unwilling to leave it. So I am attempting to articulate the spiritual and material problems with this, in the hope that you might recognize how some of the values and theological doctrines that you imparted to your family may actually be harmful to them.

I say this not only in the hope that you might be able to bring out a reconciliation between your daughter and I, and that you might be able to help me see my daughter again, but also that your whole family might be protected from potential spiritual harm. And far from believing myself to be in a superior position, I recognize that you have many commendable characteristics stemming from religious principles that are in harmony with Islam. If you study these topics more deeply and continue to discuss them with me, you may be able to avert spiritual harm from me as well, and assist in the refinement of both my character and my worship of the One and Only true God.

Worship of Devils, the Self, and Nationalism

So to review, I am saying that the idea that God is somehow inside of us, or

that our inner voice is an expression of God, ultimately translates to a moral imperative for pursuing our desires, even at the expense of the society. This is because our “inner voice” is not, in fact, God.

In fact, the Prophet Muhammed ﷺ taught us that devils whisper to human beings in constant attempts to misguide us. So from this perspective, it appears that the idea of “thought adjusters” as presented in the Urantia book is teaching human beings that their personal demons are actually God Almighty. And I seek refuge in the Almighty from this belief.

The paradigm of nationalism is the crystallization of this belief on the collective level— the law, rather than being derived from revelation, is derived from the aggregate of all the inner voices of the people. As such, you are not alone in this belief; in fact, it is fundamental to the entire modern world system.

Every human has the tendency to want to serve something greater than ourselves; we both agree that the purpose of life is to serve the Most High, the Lord God. In fact, we are hard wired, as it were, for this purpose. There was a book released on this topic recently called "Why God Won't Go Away: Brain Science and the Biology of Belief." In short, it concluded that the basic structure of our brains tends towards belief, which confirms God's statement in the Quran that we were created to serve/worship Him.

If we don't serve God, we will necessarily serve something else. And as the saying goes, "The servant cannot serve two masters." Nationalism or tribalism represent a distinct “other” that is worshiped or served in the place of God. The primary drive or motivation behind this service is at its root very animalistic; it is focused on the preservation of the self and the preservation of the nation— in short, the will to live.

That's not to say that there is anything wrong with the will to live— but ultimately we recognize that it is God Almighty who has power over life and death, so when God commands one thing and the nation commands another, we must know who our true master is.

This may require detaching from the tribe or nation. This is the path that was tread by Abraham, Jesus, and Mohammed, (عليهم السلام) who all came into major conflict with their own tribes to the point where they faced physical attacks from their own people. It is also reminiscent of the path of the tribe of Israel, who left the easy and comfortable life in Egypt under the rule of the Pharaoh for the harsh life of the wilderness.

Protecting Women

I have been working on this letter for a couple months now, and I think it's time to wrap it up. I tried my best to address the verses in the Urantia book you alluded to. To conclude, I just want to mention a topic that I am thinking about a lot as my daughter and your granddaughter is getting older.

I have been reading surveys of children and teenagers in America, and the extent to which young girls feel pressure about their appearance is terrifying. Also, the level of sexual abuse and harassment is extremely high. I can say with certainty from personal experience that Islamic etiquette in personal behavior and dress can tremendously reduce the incidence of this kind of abuse.

This etiquette was not specific to Islam until recently; strong standards of modesty existed in American society within living memory. It is only in the last few generations that these values have begun to erode, and it would be hard to overstate the negative impact it is having.

I mentioned to you before the experiences your daughter described to me of being taken advantage of and sexually abused in various situations as a teenager. I have no doubt at this point that this caused permanent emotional damage to her, and made it more difficult for us to bond, and subsequently easier for us to divorce. As many victims of abuse, I think it was shame that prevented her from talking about it.

From the perspective of Islamic culture, this is a failure on your part, and I find it sad that you characterize being protective of women as treating them like "cows." I don't see this to be your individual failure, but rather a systemic failure which we have come to accept.

While the idea of feminism has been very profitable in terms of taxation and propping up the value of the formal economy, it is trying to change the creation in the sense that it is trying to deny the fact that women are weak, and they need the protection of men. Our culture, being as materialistic as it is, also tends to downplay emotional damage.

Somehow rape is totally unacceptable, but if having consensual sex with a

man in the hope that he will love her, and then being sexually used and dumped can actually, in some cases, do more damage than rape. Such a situation is also not consensual, as the woman expects that she is entering into a long term relationship, whereas the man only wants to use her. But somehow this is not regarded as criminal?!

Experiences like this are so normal that they are not even considered abusive. The #MeToo movement is showing the scale of the problem by bringing out millions of stories that were kept secret of groping, date rape, degrading and inappropriate comments, harassment, and other forms of sexual abuse. But the fundamental rules governing sexual relationships leave women vulnerable to harm even beyond this already massive problem.

There is some kind of pride or arrogance, like people want to believe so much in their superiority that they won't accept how much they are damaged by these nearly universal experiences. Or perhaps they don't want to give up their freedom to pursue their desires, so willingly abandon traditional norms of courtship and marriage. But the psychological and social toll is horrific.

And yet somehow we are meant to believe that protective separation of genders and modest clothing is oppressive to women? Or that for their family to be involved in choosing their partner is oppressive?

Certainly, it is a big responsibility and there are many in the Muslim world who abuse their power over women. But there is also a strong tendency in American discourse to focus heavily on the cases of abuse of this power, and ignore the many millions of cases where the dignity, honor, and mental health of women is protected by this system.

I know that being used sexually and dumped, having men have sex with you without your consent while inebriated at a party, receiving unwanted sexual advances, lewd comments, being groped, or even being forcibly raped are quite common in American society (America has one of the highest rates of rape in the world), but I don't want my daughter to experience any of this.

I don't want her to experience the anxiety that I read about in recent surveys – constant focus on her physical appearance, constant comments from boys in school, ridicule and pressure and being pushed into cultivating a certain look, into wearing certain clothing. Even if it doesn't blow up into full on sexual abuse or rape, or manifest in eating disorders or self harm like it does for many teenagers, I don't even want her to be subject to the more subtle

effects of this culture. Do people really think that having boys and girls schools separate is backward? How blind can a person be?

And I can see that my ex-wife is so convinced that she is on the right path. She is trying to replicate the trajectory of her own life for my daughter, without even acknowledging the damage that sexual abuse has done to her in her life. I feel if we could have a conversation about this and acknowledge the damage that has been done, it could go a long way towards preventing the same kind of damage from happening to my daughter— your granddaughter.

I beg you to consider my plea and consider discussing this with your daughter, because it is extremely upsetting to me to think of my daughter going through what your daughter went through— or worse. And these kinds of experiences are so normal, I don't think my concern is by any means excessive or unwarranted.

I know we may have gained something from this counter-cultural revolution and the sexual liberation that came with it, but it seems that we lost something much more important in the process. So I hope that we can consider the effect that the cultural transformation of the 1960's had upon us and our thinking, and be wary of those effects.

I can't make you, or anyone believe what I believe. Nor do I think that my understanding is absolutely correct, as my understanding is always changing and growing. I can say with certainty, however, that there is a lot of value to the traditional values our culture has abandoned, and that we can learn a lot from societies where Islam has become a big part of the culture. I don't view any culture as superior, rather I think that God created us in different tribes and nations so that we can learn from each other.

I hope that what I have written can help to persuade you to do what I have already requested— that you to advise your daughter to try to overcome her personal distaste with my lifestyle choices, return to practicing Islam, and marry me again and see if we can try to make it work.

I know at the moment she is not interested in this possibility, but at the least I want it to be clear that the door is open and the optimum is for our family to stay together. If you can communicate to her the wisdom and potential benefit of trying to keep our family together, I believe it could influence her in a good direction.

If this is not something she can accept, then I would at least like my daughter to be allowed to visit me, to see what the Islamic lifestyle is like, and to know that she is loved and wanted, and that she always has the option to live with me.

The Honest Man Considered a Liar, the Liar Considered as Honest

I think you know me well enough to know that I strive to be truthful, and I hope you can also communicate this to your daughter. There have been a number of outright lies told about me by the authorities; previously, the FBI told my ex-wife that I had obtained forged documents with the aim of abducting my daughter. I don't know how they reached this conclusion, but it is absolutely false and seems to have had a hugely detrimental effect on the trust between us.

More recently, I was banned from entering Europe and visiting Sam on the pretext that I had attended a training camp and fought in Syria, and plotted attacks against the West. Obviously if there was any evidence to any of these charges I could easily be arrested, but there's not—because I've never been to Syria.

Likewise, while I theoretically discuss the need to oppose the evil actions of America, my only actions against America are intellectual criticism—I have never undertaken any actions towards an actual attack, and if I did I have little doubt that I would be quickly arrested.

I don't know who invented these lies and why, but I ask you to trust me when I tell you that I am willing to be completely honest and open with you in order to build a relationship of trust when my daughter can visit and see me. I swear by God, with God as my witness, that if we make any arrangements for my daughter to visit me, that I will do everything in my power to honor those arrangements, and will not violate our agreement in an attempt to forcibly take sole custody. I have had many opportunities to do so in the past, and I always did my best to honor my word and my commitments. I think if you reflect upon and investigate a bit you will realize this to be true.

I want to see my daughter, as is her right and my right, and whatever imagined fears prevent that from happening have no basis in reality. The reality is that with very few exceptions, Muslim countries are much safer and more peaceful than America. I would lie if I said the thought of taking her by artifice to live permanently with me had not crossed my mind, but it is a mischaracterization and contrary to my entire history of dealing with my children to suggest that I would undertake such a decision impulsively and without the consent of the mother. If I make an agreement with your daughter, I will honor it.

I also feel that I have been the victim of systematic character assassination from within your family, for the simple reason that it is easier to conjure up an image of myself as being somehow bad or deviant than to accept and deal with internal flaws that some members of your family might be struggling with. I don't deny that I have many character flaws, as all humans do, I just think that things have been blown out of proportion and that a sort of alternate reality is overlaid on this situation which allows your family members to avoid confronting and acknowledging their own failings.

This distortion places a further obstacle to my daughter and I seeing each other, because to allow her to visit me would require acknowledging that I am not as bad as I have been painted to be. So it's a bit of throwing my daughter and I under the bus in order to preserve a false image. I have not honored my word perfectly in the past with regards to my relationship with your daughter, but I assure you my failings were due to forgetfulness and inattention and not ill-will— and when I was made aware of my mistake, I apologized and sought to make amends. Nor was your daughter perfectly honorable, and I won't go into that.

I am simply pointing out that the pretext for preventing my daughter and I from seeing each other is the idea that I might behave dishonorably, and this idea is not supported by any past experience anyone has had with me. For me to be intentionally dishonorable would be a complete anomaly. I don't know what assurance I can offer, but please work with me, and explain to me what it will take to dispel these doubts, and help me in restoring a truthful perception of this situation, for the sake of your granddaughter.

As I said before, I believe it is your sincere wish to be a monotheist, rather than a polytheist, because I believe that you believe in the unity of God. I invite you to Islam with the sincere belief that it is the best means available to

us to actually avoid falling unknowingly into polytheism, or the impossible trap of serving two masters.⁷⁸

I expect your answer regarding your daughter will be that it is her choice. But all of those who have responsibility in causing a problem also have responsibility to correct the problem. I acknowledge my mistakes and my responsibility for this situation, and writing this letter is part of my effort to correct the situation as much as possible. But I think you also need to acknowledge that you also bear some responsibility for this situation, and thus have a role to play in repairing it. I am taking whatever steps I can, however ineffectual, to try to make amends for my own mistakes, and I would ask that you do the same. Even if our efforts do not succeed in actually repairing the family, perhaps it can help to build trust so that we can work together toward your granddaughter's best interests.

In any case, I appreciate your reading this, and I am happy to continue talking about religion, politics, or the family situation with the intent of seeking a deeper understanding of what is right and true, and acting upon that understanding. Also, if there is any difficulty you are facing or any way in which I can help or support you, please let me know.

Many thanks,

Ibrahim

78 Reference to Matthew 6:24